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THE WORKS

OF

VICESIMUS KNOX, D.D.

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BIOGRAPHICAL PREFACE.

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IN SEVEN VOLUMES.

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SERMONS.

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SERMON I.

THE RISING GENERATION EXHORTED TO ADOPT THE RELIGION OF THEIR CHRISTIAN FOREFATHERS.

1 CHRONICLES, XXVIII. 9.—*And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*

SUCH is the public and solemn charge of king David to his son Solomon; whom he had selected to succeed him. It contains in few words, the substance of all that could be said by a parent, who sincerely intended to promote the happiness and glory of the child whom he tenderly loved, and whom he preferred, from the dictates of his judgment no less than from affection, as the successor to his throne. But as all the advice in the holy scriptures was written for our sakes, as well as for the benefit of those to whom it is immediately addressed, I shall endeavour to derive from the consideration of it, such reflections as may conduce to the regulation of our conduct, especially at the juvenile period, and to the establishment of our happiness, both in the present and in a future state.

And thou, my son, says David, *know thou the God of thy father.* The knowledge of God is a part of science which every father is bound to teach his children with peculiar care; and yet it must be confessed, that few accomplishments are less required in the general course of a polite education, than those which lead to the formation of religious habits and a devotional taste.

The knowledge of the world is esteemed a most valuable accomplishment, and pursued with unabating ardour. But in what does it usually consist? In a knowledge of vanity and vice, dressed in the false splendour of meretricious beauty. Is the man distinguished by this boasted knowledge in its most improved state, more sincerely virtuous, generous, public-spirited, or in any respect more truly estimable, than he who, though he has no pretensions to it, is yet possessed of probity without refinement, and sincerity without the polish of artificial manners? A man may be admired by the multitude, for his knowledge of the world, as a model of elegance, and as *all-accomplished,* who is by no means delicate and scrupulous, either in morals or in principles, in theory or in practice.

A certain gay laxity and fashionable libertinism are often considered as proofs of this celebrated knowledge. A decent exterior is indeed recommended by the teachers of it, as a convenient mask for the accomplishment of interested purposes; but any remarkable rigour of virtue would be intolerably ungraceful, as well as wretchedly incommodious. The substance of this celebrated knowledge is a skill in procuring personal advancement or pecuniary advantage, by all possible means consistent with safety or concealment; and by deluding those who are simple enough, as they are called, to be governed

by antiquated prejudices in favour of a scrupulous virtue.

The knowledge of the sciences, of languages, and of those pleasing arts which have a tendency to render conversation agreeable, is pursued with a perseverance which secures a great proficiency. But it often happens that the attention which these require, so occupies the mind, as to leave it, amidst all the illumination of science, ignorant of God, and of his revealed will; of that knowledge, compared to which the science of a Newton, and the accomplishments of a Stanhope, appear to be little better than ignorance and deformity.

I am not so averse from the more elegant studies of humanity, and so little acquainted with the sweets and importance of scientific attainments, as to discourage ingenuous youth from aspiring at high excellence in philosophical and polite literature; but I am so well persuaded of their comparative insignificancy without religion, that I can only recommend them in subordination to that greatest of all objects, the knowledge which leadeth to salvation. Let all men, the scholar and philosopher, no less than the rude and illiterate plebeian, pay their first and closest attention to the knowledge of God, and to the duties which that knowledge involves. This conduct will secure their virtue; it will secure their tranquillity. They may then expatiate with delight and safety in the fields of human science, and cull every flower whose fragrance and whose colour shall invite selection.

An early attention to religion is not only a duty, but highly conducive to success in every virtuous pursuit not immediately connected with religion. For there is the strongest reason to believe, that the holy spirit of God co-operates with a good mind in

every rational study and laudable enterprise. In the pursuit of knowledge, to begin with the knowledge of God, is to choose the most probable method of acquiring every valuable attainment in art and science. It will at least sanctify and enrich every subsequent acquisition. It is the solid ore of the gold, and the adamantine substance of the jewel.

Know thou the God of thy father, says the royal parent to Solomon; and I cannot but think that this sentence contains most momentous advice to the youth of the present age. They are too apt either to neglect religion entirely, or to adopt some persuasion, which recommends itself to their choice, either by its novelty, or by the eloquence of a sanguine or enthusiastic teacher. They are *blown about by every wind of doctrine,* ready to forsake the path in which their pious ancestors walked with safety and in peace, for the delusive road pointed out to them by the vain, the visionary, or the fanatic. The pious practices of those who have gone before them, are considered as the effects of devotional ignorance, and the vulgar prejudices of a narrow education.

But this deviation from the path of safety and certainty not only leads them to unnecessary schism, which in this age is considered by many as a trifling evil, but, in time, to general libertinism and actual infidelity. Deism, or something very nearly approaching to atheism, is often the consequence of relinquishing the religion of a Christian parent, and the modes of worship sanctioned by immemorial prescription.

The first sense of duty which arises in the amiable and unpolluted mind of infancy, is that of obedience and respect for a father and a mother. The religion which they profess will naturally claim the greatest veneration in that docile age of childhood, when the

mind is unable, both through want of internal strength and external assistance, to judge for itself in affairs of great moment. He who wantonly neglects to adopt the religion of the parent at that age, or rashly condemns and rejects it at a later, exhibits symptoms of great levity or singular depravity. It is the duty of every child to follow in early life the directions of its parent; and the parent must be presumed to be the safest guide whom the child can imitate. Let it therefore be late, and not till after the maturest deliberation, that he ventures to leave the religion of his parent for a system of his own selection.

It is peculiarly necessary in the present age to caution youth against rashly relinquishing the Christian religion in which their progenitors have lived and died, and in which themselves were educated; against changing it for universal scepticism, or that philosophical freedom which is too much countenanced by the prevalence of profligacy, and the instruction of fashionable writers, in the school of taste.

He must know little of the present age, who has not observed the propensity of young men to follow the opinions of those deistical writers, who possessing wit without wisdom, and audacity without goodness, have written against Christianity, with an elegance of language and a brilliancy of imagery, which seduces the young and thoughtless from the safe paths of their forefathers. Several writers of a neighbouring nation and of our own country have recommended infidelity with all the charms of an elegant and polished phrase, and with a pleasing though deceitful ingenuity. Young men are tempted to take up the books of those writers, because they hear them celebrated by the voice of fame. They

are pleased with the novelty of the thoughts and the liveliness of the expression. In these they think themselves possessed of a treasure of wisdom, which renders them far more enlightened than their pious forefathers. Christianity, after the perusal of these authors, is rejected as an obsolete religion, fit only for the superannuated and superstitious devotee. And what is to supply its place? A haughty dependence on their own reason, libertinism of principle and licentiousness of practice.

Thus pass a few years of health and levity, without reflection, and perhaps without much uneasiness, in a state of mental insensibility; but the triumph of the wicked is of short duration. The evil day soon arrives. Age and infirmities are not to be repelled by any effort of audacity and presumption. Conscience will awake, though she has been lulled asleep by every artifice. Many circumstances will arise to superinduce a dejection of spirits, which without some source of solid consolation may terminate in despondency. But where is the consolation? Is there a confidence in God? Impossible! for it has been the uniform intention of the unhappy infidel, to ridicule all religion; and to bring his mind to believe, that all things are made and governed by chance, or by a Being too indolent to superintend the work of its own creation. But supposing him not quite so far advanced in the school of sophistry as to be an atheist, yet he is professedly not a Christian; and therefore cannot share those comforts which Christianity most liberally affords. Hope, that sweet source of joy in the midst of the deepest sorrow, springs not in the mind of a gloomy unbeliever. No flower vegetates on the dreary waste, except the hemlock and the nightshade. The utmost he can venture to expect, and dreadful is the expectation, in comparison with

the bright views of Christian faith, is utter annihilation! But though his consciousness of having offended God, may teach him faintly to hope it, yet he cannot be certain of it; and the state of his mind, vibrating between doubt and despair, will be to itself a continual torment. Sink under it he must, unless he should bury his senses in the brutal stupidity of intemperance, or repent himself of his sins, and take refuge in that Redeemer whom his best abilities were employed, in the season of health and youth, to revile. How much happier had he been, had he wisely followed the advice contained in the text, KNOW THOU THE GOD OF THY FATHER!

David subjoins to the duty of knowing the God of his father, that of serving him with integrity and alacrity; *and serve him*, says he, *with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.*

Too many Christians, even of those whose conduct and characters are respectable and decent, are disposed to be languid and formal in the performance of their religious duties. They go through their devotion, both in the church and in the closet, without affection, without the holy fervour of a cordial piety, without the glowing sensibility of divine love. But such service can never be acceptable to him, who, as the text expresses it, *searcheth all hearts, and understandeth the imaginations of the thoughts.*

It is undoubtedly true of most men, that they cannot long confine and fix their thoughts on subjects of mere contemplation. The active fancy of man will break from every common restraint. Such is the infirmity of our boasted reason, that we cannot always direct the thoughts to the object which she points out for consideration. And it is reasonable to hope

and believe, that God will pardon such deviations as are the effects of human infirmity.

But the coldness and the wandering, which are forbidden, and therefore sinful, arise from intentional neglect and voluntary inattention. As for instance, when we employ our thoughts *without reluctance* in the church and at any other place, during the hours of devotion, in meditating on our worldly concerns, or in concerting schemes of pleasure or profit, we are justly to be censured as guilty of hypocrisy in the sight of man, and of a most provoking insult to that God whom we pretend to worship; and who, however formal and sanctified our appearance may be among our fellow-creatures, can distinguish at a glance the mere ostentation of goodness from the reality, the glossy outside of superficial pretence from the internal substance of solid virtue.

It is not sufficient, to constitute a good man and a good citizen, to pay a respect to Christianity merely because it is the national religion; and to conform to the offices of the church in which we are educated, for the sake of peace, good order, and decency. This respect and conformity may answer the narrow purposes of worldly politicians, and satisfy the laws of the country; but they must appear to him, before whom all hearts are open, mean subterfuges, perhaps equally or more reprehensible than undissembled impiety. It is easy for a man, possessed of little arts and despicable cunning, to deceive his short-sighted fellow-creatures; but he cannot hope to be concealed from him whose eye pervades the closest recess, *that searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all imaginations.*

We might indeed conclude from our own reason, what we may collect from the text, that no religion

can be acceptable to God, but that which proceeds from a perfect heart and a willing mind; and that a mere political conformity, for the sake of order, is an impious mockery.

In order to avoid a divided attention between God and Mammon, when we enter the church or the closet, let us impress upon our minds a lively sense of the universal presence of God, and of the particular awe in which it becomes his poor creatures to stand, when they enter places more immediately consecrated to his service, or engage in employments which seem to call upon him for his more particular inspection. Think what it is to appear before him who is able to punish us with every evil which our imaginations can fear, or to bless us with felicities which no heart can adequately conceive! Which of us, if he were to appear before an earthly king, a poor frail mortal like himself, would not be attentive and respectful? And shall he dare to approach the King of kings with such ease and want of veneration, as would justly give offence in the palace of a mortal invested with a perishable crown? God indeed is merciful, or else how many of us would have been cast out from his courts, *where one day is better than a thousand, to outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Most insulting to God is the hypocritical obedience to his divine revelation, which means only to answer private and interested ends in the world, by exhibiting the forms of godliness while the power is utterly denied. Sudden wanderings of thought may certainly proceed from accidents scarcely in our power, and may be venial; but a settled, a cool, deliberate impiety, in thought and principle, dressed out in the garb of gravity and sanctity, must be offensive in the

highest degree to the God of truth, as it would be despised and hated by every man of integrity.

I particularly reprobate this religious duplicity, because I believe there are in this age many unbelievers, who *make a merit* of outwardly displaying the appearance of Christianity, and denominate it a *philosophical and voluntary submission*, as far as external acts extend, to the prejudices of the country in which fortune fixed their birth. Let such deceivers be persuaded, that they deceive themselves most miserably; and may they soon learn to follow the advice of David, to serve God *with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind*, for the reason or motive which David assigns, because *God searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts.* Their error indeed arises from infidelity, and therefore it will be proper to advise them in the previous words of David, *to know the God of their fathers*, from whom their own pride and corruption of heart, or the example and writings of deists, have unfortunately seduced them.

David closes this part of his advice with adding, *if thou seekest him, the God of thy father, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*

The first part of this declaration conveys great comfort, as it secures success in our search after God. *Seek, and you shall find;* an easy condition of obtaining that which is more precious than the gold of Ophir. The things which the world reaches out as objects of pursuit, are not only deceitful and disappointing in their nature when obtained, but, as most men have experienced, difficult of acquisition.

Man goeth forth to his labour, to lay up a store for himself or his family, which shall place him above

dependence, and enable him to enjoy the advantages of plenty without the toil of application; but innumerable accidents intervene to frustrate his best endeavours. He often seeks, and finds not; and thus vexation and disappointment add to the real evils of his poverty. But this can never happen in the pursuit of religious perfection. The scriptures assure us, in the strongest terms, that he shall not fail to find, who faithfully enters on the research of spiritual treasure.

Make then the experiment, ye who have hitherto neglected God for the fugitive and uncertain advantages of this world: make the experiment of seeking happiness in an acquaintance with him who never yet deserted a sincere and diligent votary. In the treasures of the scriptures search for mines of wealth, such as neither time nor accident can diminish or depreciate. Learn to place a due value on the riches of God's grace. You will in course seek them in preference to all others; and the happy consequence will be, that you shall be rich indeed. Place your hopes of happiness in the knowledge and practice of your Christian duty, and you shall never be disappointed. Every other dependence will be found fallacious. Lean on this world for your full and final happiness, and you lean on a reed which shall pierce your hand, and break under your pressure.

If thou seek him, he will be found of thee, says David; but *if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*

To be cast off for ever, by the author of our being, and the giver of all the blessings of it? To be cast off!—and for ever! Consider this, ye who either neglect your religious duties entirely, or leave the God and the religious persuasion of your fathers, for the strange novelties of every pretended philo-

sopher, or mistaken bigot. Consider into what a pit of misery ye rashly plunge yourselves. To be forsaken of your Maker, to be forsaken for ever! Whither can ye fly for support and consolation? Nothing can save you, thus deserted, from a degree of misery beyond all that language can express, or imagination conceive. An eclipse takes place in the soul. The world intervenes between the soul and its God, its fountain of light and life.

Let me exhort all those who have been brought up in the knowledge of God, to beware how they forsake him as they advance in life, lest they should be cast off for ever; lest they should incur that dreadful fate, which would render it happy for them if they had never been born, and tempt the compassionate observer to exclaim with Job, *Why died they not from their mother's womb?*

Beware then, ye who are young and inexperienced; beware, at your setting out in life, of associating with company where the name of God is blasphemed, and the Christian religion treated with ridicule. Such company abounds in the present age, among the half learned, the self-conceited, and the profligate; and it is difficult for a young man to withstand the temptations to evil which it offers. The wisest method is not to enter it. He who is once enticed by sinners to associate with them, will soon listen to their conversation without pain, however immoral or blasphemous. The transition is but too easy, from patiently bearing impiety in the conversation of others, to exhibiting it ourselves; and it is scarcely possible, but that he who converses impiously, should soon lose all remaining principles of religion, and become a professed infidel, and, in his heart, an abandoned profligate. *He forsakes the guide of his youth,* and falls into destruction.

Let me exhort the juvenile part of my audience to attend to that excellent law of the decalogue, too often repeated without attention, which teaches you to honour your parents, and consequently to follow their instructions. There is, unfortunately, no topic more frequent in bad company, than that of deriding the aged parent employed in the offices of devotion; the consequence of which is, that he who frequents bad company, soon learns to despise the solid words of wisdom which a father or a mother has inculcated in early infancy. Let nō wit nor merriment tempt you to join in derision of those, to whom you are bound by every obligation of gratitude, reason, and religion. The punishment of despising a parent will fall heavily upon you, not only as it is a violation of an express commandment, and must therefore excite the displeasure of God; but also as it will tempt you to despise those precepts which your father gave you in your childhood for your future direction; and which, if properly attended to, would have conducted you safely, pleasantly, honourably, through life, and afforded you hope in the day of disease, and at the hour of death, of A JOYFUL RESURRECTION.

It is also of great consequence to you, that you avoid those books which, however elegant and entertaining, are no less seducing, than vicious and unbelieving companions; I mean the fashionable philosophers of a neighbouring nation, and their imitators in our own. Either read them not at all, or not till reflection and experience shall have confirmed your belief and principles on foundations so sure, as not to be shaken by the witticisms of lively but superficial writers, or by vain and petulant disputants in conversation; by those whose ingenuity of

understanding is misled by the corruption, the pride, and the malignity of their depraved dispositions.

Consider, thou that darest to despise the religion of thy father, the shortness of thy life, thy weakness, and thy misery; consider, and rejoice that religion opens a gleam of hope, a prospect of sunshine in the midst of the surrounding gloom. Let all thy best endeavours be directed to that most important of all objects, the securing of God Almighty's favour and protection; that haven in the storm, when the waters shall go over our soul. Whatever doubts and cavils little witlings and minute philosophers may raise, no man can deny our absolute dependence on some Superior Power; and no man can prove, that an attempt to render ourselves acceptable in the sight of this Superior Power, is *unreasonable*, or attended with any kind of injury to ourselves, or to the rest of the human race. Let us then fall down before him, with the deepest sense of our own unworthiness, and of love and veneration for his power and wisdom in the creation, and for his mercy in the redemption, of us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

God grant that what I have advanced may lead you to walk in the ways of piety and peace, in which your fathers walked who now sleep; and that as you follow, with all humility, their footsteps to the grave, you may also follow them, when they shall emerge in glory, and when the happiness of heaven itself shall be increased by a joyful meeting of parents and children, who loved each other in life, and who, in the resurrection, shall not be divided.

SERMON II.

HOPE IN GOD.

PSALM xlii. 5.—*Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the light of his countenance.*

THE beautifully pathetic strains of this psalm are supposed to have been occasioned by the unnatural rebellion of Absalom against the royal writer of it. And indeed, unhappy parent, thou hadst reason to be cast down, if ever man had, when thine own son was in arms against thee, and had driven thee from Jerusalem, which thy soul loved. A child wielding a sword against his father! The reflection is sharper than the sword, and pierces more deeply, and cuts more keenly, than the barbed arrow from the bow. And bitterly dost thou lament thy misfortune. Thou feelest as a man, though at the same time, like a good man, thou derivest consolation from the only source of it in severe affliction, HOPE in GOD.

The example which David exhibits, in seeking comfort under distress, from God, is worthy universal imitation; and the words of the text are doubtless recorded, not only as a memorial of David's behaviour under his distress, but as a guidance for all the sons and daughters of affliction.

And let me ask, What mortal is there who is not of this family? Man is born to woe. Many drink

more deeply of the bitter cup than others, but all, at some time of their lives, have a portion of it. Man fell from his obedience, and evil entered into the world; the natural consequence and punishment of rebellion. Human misery is indeed productive of improvement; and God Almighty decreed in his wisdom, that the consequence of man's fall should operate as one cause in producing his re-elevation, by causing his repentance and amendment.

The lessons of virtue are best taught in the school of adversity; but it is a severe school, and man, in the course of his trials, frequently faints. The burthen of his evils becomes intolerable: he falls down prostrate to the earth, and would rejoice if it would swallow him up, and snatch him from the ills of life, even by consigning him for everlasting to *nonentity.*

It must indeed be confessed, that if religion did not open cheerful prospects to the view, human nature might have reason to complain of the injustice of the Divine government. What can be more unjust, than that a man should be unconsciously born, forced into existence without his own consent, merely to suffer evil without the hope of a compensation! Such an idea cuts off all hope in God, and therefore tends immediately to produce *insanity and suicide,* both which prevail deplorably in the present age, in consequence of unsettled principles of religion, or of downright infidelity; a circumstance which, I hope you will agree with me, renders the subject I have chosen particularly seasonable. Insanity and suicide!—these are the glorious trophies of that false philosophy which seems to be aiming at nothing less than the extermination of Christianity.

Great, heavy, numerous are the evils of life. It is granted with a sigh: but they are not so great, not so heavy, and not so numerous as to lead to

insanity and suicide, unless God and a sense of his protection are first discarded.

For great, solid, numerous, on the other hand, are the comforts of Christianity. Christianity does most clearly vindicate the ways of heaven. We collect from that system, that this life is a state of probation; that the troubles of it are trials of faith and virtue; that no believer shall *be tempted above what he is able to bear;* that he shall have support from heaven; and that his afflictions, which endure comparatively *but for a moment, shall be rewarded with an eternal and exceeding weight of glory.*

This persuasion alone is sufficient to afford comfort to a sincere believer under the severest distress; but he has also another source of joy. Under the pressure of adversity the sincere believer looks up to God as to a friend and father, with hope and confidence, and sees, amidst the gloominess which surrounds him, a bright effulgence bursting from the lowering horizon; a serene sky, which forebodes that the clouds immediately surrounding him will soon be dispelled. Though he travels with weary step in the vale of sorrow and darkness, and his feet be ready to slip in the dangerous and rugged road; yet shall thy staff, O God, be his support and guide. Though he stumble, yet shall he not fall; thy right hand shall be stretched out to raise him up, and through hope in thy aid he shall persevere with alacrity, and finally conquer, and be crowned with immortality.

I will take a transient view of a few among the miseries of life, for to enumerate them all is impossible, and endeavour to point out in what manner a trust in God affords consolation under them; and I will then proceed to evince, that they who have no confidence in God, however they may plume them-

selves on their self-sufficiency, their natural parts, and their acquired learning, are of all men most miserable.

To be reduced from the glittering envied heights of rank and riches, to the humble vale of poverty and obscurity, is a change which the worldly-minded deplore as the extremity of woe, the last act in the tragedy of life. They have been accustomed to splendour; and they must now be contented with necessaries, however mean and homely. They have been used to ornament in dress, and superfluities at the table; and they must now rejoice, if they can be protected from inclement weather by decent clothing, and from hunger by wholesome diet. They have been attended by a useless tribe of domestics, and they must now either accommodate themselves, or be satisfied with such attendants as contribute only to use, and not to ostentation. They bewail their worldly adversity in all the bitterness of unfeigned sorrow; and indeed it must be confessed, that if in this world only they have hope, they are fallen into misfortunes which may justly render them deeply dejected. They have lost their all: they have lost, in the loss of riches, the object of their ardent love; and they go about moaning, in the agony of one who is bereaved of his only comfort. But if they have happily furnished their hearts with religious principles, their grief shall soon be turned into joy. They shall look up from the darkling valley, and behold on the hills the feet of him that bringeth salvation. They shall see with purged eyes the vanity of all which this world can bestow, and in the midst of poverty find riches, which cannot make to themselves wings; find a treasure, where *neither moth doth corrupt, nor thieves break in and steal.* And indeed, if their worldly adversity has caused

them to think at last of him who gave and who taketh away, it may justly be esteemed the most fortunate event of their lives. It is good for them that they have been afflicted. If poverty has taught them humility, it has given them an ornament, in the sight of God, more beautiful and precious than all the splendid decorations which their former opulence lavishly supplied. If their poverty has taught them not to lean on the world, it has found for them a bulwark and column of support which shall never fall; even the ROCK OF AGES, JESUS CHRIST.

Happy change! though mortals, fascinated with the scenes before them, can scarcely acknowledge it; yet if salvation is more desirable than perdition, wise and godly adversity is better than sinful and thoughtless opulence: and that uninterrupted prosperity has a natural tendency to blind the understanding, and render the heart insensible to the feelings of piety; proud, presumptuous, and hard; we need but look into the gay, the busy, and the great world to observe.

No man, however, whatever may be the benefits of adversity, will voluntarily relinquish the temporal advantages of prosperity; but every man *may* be deprived of them by the vicissitudes of this mortal life; and when this happens, considerations of this kind will surely teach him not to sink under his misfortune, but to turn it evidently into a blessing, and a prize. O! taste, ye sons and daughters of adversity, what sweet waters of comfort issue from heaven! look up and see a sunbeam from the throne of God, which is ready to dart a glorious lustre around your gloomy path, and to convert the wilderness in which ye wander, into a paradise of fruits and flowers, blooming, like evergreens, in the midst

of winter! *Hope ye in God; for ye shall yet praise him for the light of his countenance.*

In all worldly losses and disappointments, what has been said in the change from affluence to want, will be equally applicable. The loss of fame or character, if it be unjustly lost, will little affect him who resolves to recommend himself to the approbation of the Most High, instead of courting the breath of popular applause. The loss of health, though painful, and most devoutly to be deprecated indeed, as one of the greatest of real misfortunes, will be wonderfully alleviated by a sincere faith and hope that, at the close of this short life, *our corruptible shall put on incorruption, and our mortal, immortality;* and that once more, like the phœnix from its ashes, we shall flourish in a beautiful rejuvenesence. Thou, O God! art health and strength and glory to all who flee to thee for succour; and the pious sufferer, on the bed of disease and death, in his last faltering accents, whispers praise.

But there is one loss, which I confess is almost too grievous to be born with patience; I mean the loss of those we love, the loss of children, dear relatives, or any others closely allied either by friendship or consanguinity. It is a separation which rends the heart-strings; the fountain of tears will then burst in torrents, and the mourner will long go heavily on his way; his soul will refuse to be comforted; and sacred be his sorrows: let so much indulgence be allowed to this amiable infirmity, that no attempts be made to soothe the sufferer by remonstrance, till his passion has subsided, and time's lenient influence assuaged the venom of the wound. Then, at last, religion, that lovely matron, that kind nursing mother, will step in with friendly aspect, raise the

mourner from the ground, and bid him look up to God, who can call the forms which moulder in the earth from the dark chambers of death, from a state of corruption, to a state of glory; who, after a short separation, can cause those who were united in love during life, to meet in love again after death, never more to be torn asunder, and wrenched from the rivets of affection.

Sweet hope! unknown to the ungodly, to the disputer of this world, the vain, the conceited caviller, into whose dark and callous bosom the beams of grace never penetrated: Sweet hope! and more to be desired than all the treasure the richest plunderer ever wrung from the oppressed Indian on the banks of the Ganges—To meet those who were dear to us as our own souls, in a purified and exalted state; lovelier and more estimable, more worthy our love, than they ever appeared on earth! Delightful expectation! and blessed is he who cherishes it, and blessed be the God, who has in his revelation given wretched human nature reason to embrace it with confidence.

"Child of my heart," may the poor parent exclaim, while he bends his head over the untimely grave, and drops a parting tear on the insensible coffin—"Child of my heart, farewell; for thee I mourn; nature must indeed feel the parting pang! thou art torn from me, and the anguish of separation is as if one should tear by violence this limb from this body! my heart bleeds at every pore! But I submit to necessity with cheerfulness; because my religion teaches me to turn my view from earth to yonder regions of glory, where I see thee, with the eye of faith, borne up by angels in a transfigured form, partaking the bliss of saints, and clothed in the vesture of immortality. Thou canst not come

to me, but one comfort still remains, I shall go to thee. My sorrows shall be turned into joy. Gracious is God. In him will I trust! I return to the poor occupations of a wretched world for a short time comforted by nothing but a reliance on him who subdued death, and a hope, by his mercy, to be reunited in the mansions of bliss to the souls whom I loved in the region of sorrow. Thou only sleepest in the grave, as lately in thy cradle; no more I weep: sleep on, sweet babe! the voice of lamentation shall be changed into a song of triumph! *I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, write, from henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, even so saith the spirit, for they rest from their labours.* And thy spirit, sweet babe, is pure and spotless! and thou art gone with cherubs, thy brothers and companions. *O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory.*"

Such is the good man's triumph over a calamity which, of all those which afflict poor mortals, is indeed the sorest, the most afflicting. To be bereaved of one's children, is to be bereaved indeed! Let him who never had a child, think lightly of it!

I have enlarged a little on this instance, because he who learns where to seek comfort under the greatest of sorrows, will know where to find it in abundance when involved in the lighter. And what are all the losses compared with those which death, the inexorable king of terrors, occasions? The loss of money is the loss of trash—may be compensated by subsequent industry and good success; but who can call back a child from the grave? the loss of a beloved babe is a blow which no feeling bosom could bear, were it not strengthened from above.

But other losses by death are severe indeed. For whom tolls the bell on yonder time-honoured tower?

For my friend at whose table I sat but yesterday, in all the joy of cordial conviviality!

Gone is the friend of my heart,—gone perhaps the wife of my bosom—my respected father—my tender mother, at whose breasts I lay in infancy—on whose knees I sat and smiled and prattled, and asked by wailing, or moved by tears, and she was moved! Deaf is the ear that listened to the voice of love; cold the heart that throbbed in sympathy; closed the eye that sparkled with joy at meeting me; the pulse which so often fluttered beats no more! Cruel separation! but I can bear it; as a Christian I can bear it, because my belief teaches me that we shall meet again. All that was lovely shall be lovelier still. The unbeliever, unhappy man, has no such hope. Dismal, dreary—he views nothing but a long vista, terminating in darkness, shadows, frightful phantoms, baleful regions, where hope never comes that comes to all.

In every calamity to which man is heir, and the time would fail me if I attempted to enumerate the sad and long catalogue, he who puts his trust in the Almighty, will find comforts springing up like flowers under his feet in a desert. He will experience, that God is the father of the fatherless, the husband of the widow, the friend of the friendless, and the sure guardian of all such as have none to help them! An inward strength is supplied to him, who, in the midst of misery, abounds in faith and indulges hope. True religion possesses a power resembling that of oil poured on the troubled sea. It smooths the waves to a glassy expanse of limpid water. True religion possesses a power like that attributed by the ancient mythologists to a certain king, by which he was enabled to turn all he touched into solid gold. It is the panacea, the anodyne of

woe, the vulnerary, the universal medicine of mental disease.

Wise then are those parents, who, among the accomplishments which they solicitously seek for their children, forget not to furnish them with a balsam, which they may bear in their own bosoms, and which will gently assuage that pain and anguish to which, like every mortal, they may one day be exposed. How vain and shortsighted are others, who, anxiously wishing to promote the future happiness of their offspring, engage their whole attention in cultivating those arts alone, which contribute to the acquisition or security of a little worldly pelf, and the decoration of a perishable body!

We have seen that the pious and faithful Christian finds comfort under extreme misery, in falling down before the God of mercy; but what shall console him who lives without God in the world, who has no God to fall down before, under those sufferings and misfortunes which will undoubtedly be his portion at some period of his life, probably at the last period when he is least able to bear them? He scorns to bend his stubborn knee, and to lift up his heart in prayer; for he has been taught to consider all religion as a mode of superstition, as priestcraft, as an engine of state, as the folly of dotards. On what then can he depend?

On what? on himself! This poor, shivering, short-lived, helpless animal, called Man, depends upon himself, and defies his Maker. Proud of his own scanty reason, proud of the little science he has been able to collect, he doubts not, but that his own skill will be able to extricate him from every difficulty, and that his own strength will support him whenever he is assaulted by calamity. Poor mortal, how little does he know of his own nature! nothing

is more wretched and infirm than a man abandoned to his own guidance, without the grace of God. And how, indeed, does this proud boaster support himself? After all his arrogant pretensions, he is like a babe in leading-strings, forsaken by its nurse. Consult experience. Does he not vent his rage and grief in the bitterest expressions of resentment, in cursing, and in blaspheming? Is not his heart torn with the conflict of violent passions, when all should be still and serene? See him stretched, all pale and languid, on the bed of sickness; horror and dismay mark his bloodless countenance; he loves neither God nor man, he trusts in neither. Does not his fury often end in real madness? Do not the pistol, the dagger, or the poisoned cup, too frequently close the melancholy scene of aggravated misery? He gnashes with his teeth, curses God, curses man, dies, and makes no sign of grace!

He falls; but he falls, not ripe like a shock of corn, or like fruit come to maturity. He falls by his own hand, and hopes for that peace, which the world and its vanities could not bestow, in the grave. To become as though he had never been, is the greatest blessing to this heroic philosopher, this liberal-minded man, this enlightened despiser of the Holy Trinity, who dares to strip our Saviour of all share of the divine nature, to blaspheme the Holy Ghost, his sanctifier, and to cast Jesus, his redeemer, from the throne of heaven! To be as though he had never been, is the ultimate hope of this enlightened, this self-applauding philosopher! How gloomy, dreary, forlorn, and dismal, are all his views in life! Little does he know of that health of mind, that serene cheerfulness, that divine complacency, which soothes the resigned Christian; who, whenever his soul has a tendency to be disquieted within him,

resolves *to hope in God;* and in consequence of his firm reliance, finds the light of God's countenance beaming upon him with the most animating warmth and the brightest illumination; like the day-spring from on high chasing away the shades of night. He stands as a rock in the sea; the waves beat on its base, but eternal sunshine settles on its head.

But in what manner do the greater part endeavour to subdue the sense of their afflictions? By eagerly running into amusements and diversions of every kind, the most puerile and nugatory. Dissipation of mind is their only resource. They resolve not to THINK, they determine not to FEEL; but can they keep their resolution? Dreadful, I fear, are the intervals of their diversions. They do, indeed, continue to drive away reflection, during the noisy mirth of festivity, or the dazzling scenes of fashionable gaiety; but neither the noise nor the glitter can continue always without intermission. At night, when they lay their heads on their pillows, serious thoughts will spontaneously obtrude themselves, however unwelcome, and become the more importunate as they have been the more obstinately resisted. Imagination can with difficulty conceive a more distressing situation, than that of him who has spent the whole day in running away from himself, but is obliged, at the close of it, to meet the phantom which has haunted him, and which, by the help of company and dissipation, he has escaped, till the bell announces the midnight hour. Silent is the voice of mirth, which lately re-echoed through the palace of pleasure. The musical instruments sleep. The wine no longer gives its colour in the cup. The lamps which dazzled him with the brightness of their lustre, and charmed with the variegated colours of the rainbow, are extinguished. All is still and dark. And

how the miserable man is in his chamber alone, silent; and whether he will or not, must commune with himself and be still. The darkness and gloominess of the night are but imperfect emblems of his soul in his present state. Has he any gleam of comfort? No, not one; he has shut up every avenue to light and cheerfulness. Does he kneel to pray? Alas, to whom should he pray, with his infidel principles? He has no God to whom to pray. The philosophers have robbed him of his God; but can they cure his diseases, or ward off death, or give him sleep even at this midnight hour? He has acknowledged no God but the world, and the world has deserted him. He has no comfort in the night-season, in that quiet hour when the sleep of innocence and piety is sweet indeed. The pious peasant slumbers sweetly on his flock bed; but this man cannot close his eyelids, though stretched on down and surrounded with trappings. Nature, however, quite wearied with vigilance, may at last submit; but short and disturbed is the repose. The bed of down is to him a bed of thorns. He counts the hours with all the impatience of a perturbed spirit. The lingering morning at last returns. The same circle of dissipation returns with it; till at length, by force of habit, the mind contracts a stupid insensibility to its woe: a dreadful insensibility, since it argues a mortification begun in the soul, a wretched state from which there are scarcely any hopes of recovery.

All men, indeed, would willingly fly from their evils, but they cannot fly with sufficient speed to outstrip the merciless pursuers; unless, indeed, they fly to God. He is ever at hand, and will be heard by every one who, with a heart filled with faith, ani-

mated with hope, warm with charity, and subdued by humility, offers up prayer in affliction.

But there is another resource, besides the dissipation of company and the circle of pleasure. Many seek comfort under their distress in the draught of intoxication: a most unhappy expedient, since it tends immediately to increase the misery which, like a treacherous friend, it pretends to remove. Intoxication causes only a short oblivion of woe, and weakens the mind so as to render it less able to bear its misfortunes, when the artificial stupor is dispelled. It brutalizes the man, and chains him to the earth. There he lies, and cannot lift up the eye of his mind to heaven. The energies of his soul, by which it might otherwise ascend, are all deadened. The wings are clogged in the mire of sensuality, like those of the insect in the vessel of honey, and cannot expand themselves for so sublime a flight, as that which would lead him up to the throne of mercy. How delusive is the draught of intoxication! Sweet indeed to the taste, but poison to the soul. The sleep which it produces is the sleep of death: death to all the finer sensibilities of our nature, death to all religion, and perhaps, which God forbid, death eternal!

The temptation to seek immediate relief under a very heavy affliction from the bowl of intemperance, is great; but beware, thou that art yet alive to God, beware how thou indulgest in the deceitful potion. One submission will facilitate a second, and when thou art once on the declivity of the hill, who can say how rapidly, and how low thou mayest descend? Thou mayest descend, for aught thou knowest, down to the pit of everlasting destruction. Be then on thy guard, and avoid excess of strong drink in thine adversity, as thou wouldest the

poisoned cup, the serpent's tooth, or the uplifted dagger.

If thou wishest for a cordial, because thy heart is faint within thee, a cordial is at hand, of the highest efficacy, sweet to the taste, and comfortable to the heart. Fall on thy knees, and humbly pray for support; and the God of mercies will send his Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to fill thy bosom with joy which no man taketh away from thee. Hear the comfortable words of the divine invitation, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.* What music to the ear of mortal man! Will the dry disquisitions of metaphysicians afford such melody to the heart? What say they?—Your misery has no remedy.—Religion is superstition.—Die—rot—be forgotten like thy fellow-brute!

With respect to those who pretend to deduce, from philosophy alone, such reflections as will enable them to bear all afflictions of life with patience, their number is small, compared with the great mass of mankind; and their pretensions are the result of pride, rather than of conviction and experience. Philosophy, a name sadly perverted, true philosophy (very different from that of the modern sceptics) can indeed suggest consolations from reason; and reason can certainly afford many topics tending to alleviate the sense of misfortunes; but reason cannot entirely cure the wounds of the mind. She can only palliate the sore which religion cures; and experience evinces, that few are more outrageous under the pressure of calamity, and more inclined to despair under misfortune, than the proud pretenders to philosophy, unnaturally divested of religion. Man is a pitiable object, when he acknowledges his weakness with all humility; but when the worm,

that crawls on the earth, dares to trust in its own strength, and to defy its Creator, it seems to invite the foot of Omnipotence to trample upon it with indignation. If the mercy of God were not long-suffering beyond all conception, he who in his weakness and distress refuses to seek comfort from him, would draw down upon his head the heaviest, the hottest bolt of the divine vengeance.

Afflictions are mercifully designed by God to reduce men from a thoughtless or sinful state to a reliance on him. The heart on which they produce not this effect, may be compared to the stony ground, on which, when the seed falls, it perishes, without vegetation: it is a barren fig-tree, and will draw upon it a curse.

Let not us, I beseech you, O let not us become so insensible to God's goodness and to our own happiness, as to neglect the Disposer of all events both prosperous and adverse, either in the day of prosperity or adversity. He will sweeten every enjoyment in a successful season, and alleviate the burden of every evil in the day of our calamities. Happy situation! to have the all-powerful and most merciful Lord of heaven and earth our friend and protector against the assaults of adversity. He shall defend us, under the shadow of his wing, from every evil which the devil or man worketh against us. Though we appear unfortunate in the eyes of the world; though we may be poor and despised, who were once rich and honoured; though we may suffer in our reputation; though we may be tormented with pain and the languor of ill health; though death should tear from our arms the dearest object of our love; yet will we trust in God, and he will infuse a balsam into our hearts, which shall assuage every anguish, and heal the sorest laceration. The

fear of death, which torments the sinful man of the world, shall have no painful effect on the man who really hopes and fully trusts in Him, who hath subdued death, and *brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

Let me then prevail with you, to labour *in season and out of season,* to bring your minds to this real confidence in God, under all the vicissitudes of this mortal life, in prosperity as well as adversity; for a godless prosperity is the most dangerous situation to which human nature can be exposed. Exercise yourselves in it under little crosses and inconveniencies, that when you suffer great evils, you may not be off your guard; but may meet them with the fortitude of men, of christian men, arising from an entire trust in your heavenly *Friend* and *Father.* While we are well, and all goes smoothly with us, I know it is easy to prescribe to others, and that we are apt to give advice, which, in our turn, we are unwilling to follow. But let us not be wise in word only, but in deed; and seriously lay to heart, and apply to ourselves, the doctrines which we hear and approve. If we have received a good impression, let us bear it away uneffaced to our graves. If God has vouchsafed to open our hearts, let us not suffer them to close again amidst our worldly cares.

Then may you say to your souls under every evil with which you may be visited in the pilgrimage of this life, even in the last pangs of agonizing nature; *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?* To grieve, indeed, is natural, but to grieve without hope, is forbidden to the professor of Christianity, and leads to the last sad catastrophe of human life. To repine and murmur against Providence, is unpardonable impiety: to sink into despair, and to cherish a wish to termi-

nate our sufferings by self-murder, an act too common, and even recommended by the writings of men possessing acute understandings with hard hearts, unhappily strangers to the comforts of religion, is to increase every evil which we suffer; and for the sake of avoiding a momentary pain, to risk the bitter pains of eternal death. Adopt not such unhappy errors, O my soul; but HOPE THOU IN GOD!—On God recline, as on a pillow, for repose, and a column for support.—Hope thou in God, the foundation of all real happiness, and all solid and lasting comfort. Hope thou in God—for I shall yet, after all my fears and sufferings, I shall yet praise him for the light of his countenance, for that light which, if I may compare great things with small, like the light of the blessed sun, shall dispel every mist of doubt, dread, and sorrow, and leave thee, O my soul, in a state of unclouded serenity; only to be surpassed by the happiness of those realms above, where the light of God's countenance beams forth to all eternity, the mild rays of mercy, blended with glory and majesty unutterable!

SERMON III.

ON THE MEANS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF GRACE.

2 PETER, iii. 18.—*Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

No acquisitions in polite learning, in elegant arts, or profound science, are comparable, in the opinion of a true Christian, to improvement in grace, and in the knowledge of his Redeemer. The comfort which

the human heart derived from moral philosophy, and the light of nature, was indeed great; but it was fugacious and, unsubstantial as a dream, in comparison with the solid satisfactions of a state of grace. It is the peculiar glory of Christianity that it affords its worthy professors the enjoyment of heavenly grace; a gift which no other system could ensure, and of which man in his corrupt and unregenerated state could never participate.

The grace of God, in its primary signification, implies, in general, his favour. The favour of God is evidently the most valuable of all possessions; but the word *grace*, as used in scripture and by Christian writers, means not so much that favour in general, as some particular effects of it. It implies that holy temper of mind, that habitual spirit of devotion, that cheerful resignation, that uniform piety and innocence of life, which originate from an unshaken belief of Christianity, from a conscientious discharge of its duties, and from an inward conviction, that God Almighty vouchsafes to infuse into the heart the sweet influence of his heavenly benediction. Good Christians have, in all periods of the church, felt and acknowledged the Divine comforts of this state. Their souls have been elevated, and their hearts have burned within them; and there is no doubt but that the lively effects on their feelings were immediately produced by the operation of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, the third person in the adorable Trinity.

It is not indeed to be wondered, that libertines, whose perceptions are limited to sensuality, should deny the existence of sensations too pure and refined to obtain admittance into their hearts. It is not difficult to account for the scepticism of sophistical disputants in the schools, men who pride themselves

on, I know not what, infallibility of human reason. They are blinded to the truths, and rendered impenetrable to the influence of Christianity by their arrogance and presumption; for pride is so offensive to Heaven, that grace is particularly denied to the proud, and most expressly promised to the lowly.

But he who understands not, or will not acknowledge, the reality of grace, the actual operation of the Holy Ghost on the human heart, deprives Christianity of its vital principle, its most essential excellence. Grace, or the benign influence of the Holy Spirit, acting with holy energy on the pious heart, at this moment, and in all ages, is the very soul of our religion. It is this which, with invisible force, pervades the spiritual world, as the electrical fluid animates the natural. It is health, joy, and life; and the want of it, disease, despair, and death.

When our Saviour had accomplished the benevolent purpose for which his spirit assumed a human form, and visited our planet, he left us not comfortless in his absence. He deputed the third Person in the Divine essence to remain with us for ever, to live in our bosoms, a warm, active, energetic principle of religious life. He required only, that we should preserve our hearts in that proper state of purity which is necessary for its reception. It is this entrance of the Holy Ghost into our bosoms, which constitutes the recovery of human nature from the direful effects of its fall. Awful, mysterious, yet delightful truth! Part of the Divine nature deigns to fix its residence, and to build its temple, where it delights to dwell, in the bosom of man; of man, once ruined and abandoned. The prospect is immediately brightened. Death and despair, with all their pallid, lurid, and sable train, vanish. Life and light spring up once more. The fabric of

human nature is no longer condemned to lie in ruins. See it again rise, a regular mansion, beautiful and magnificent as it was originally formed by the Divine architect of the universe. The broken Corinthian columns, that, with all their sculptured foliage, lay mouldering in the dust, like the ruins of Balbec or Palmyra, start into symmetrical form, and become a gorgeous temple, a temple for the Holy Ghost, the unspeakable effluence of the mysterious Deity.

But, alas! we must repress our triumphs; for what has been done by grace and mercy, may be undone by man's disobedience. By sin our life is converted to death, our light to darkness, our joy to unutterable woe. Sin, like a deadly poison, has power to quench this Holy Spirit, and to introduce a spiritual death in the midst of our animal life.

I shall, in the subsequent remarks, first, endeavour to describe the spiritual death; secondly, to point out the means of recovering life; and, thirdly, add such exhortations as may preserve men in a state of grace, or restore them to it after they have unfortunately relinquished it by their folly.

I. It is reasonable to suppose that all human creatures over the whole surface of the peopled globe are capable of grace; there cannot be a doubt of it, after baptism, or their admission into the religion of Jesus Christ. The *manifestation of the spirit is given to* EVERY MAN *to profit withal.* A good education, corroborated by the influence of a good example, can seldom fail to cause us to grow in grace as we grow in years, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But where education is entirely neglected, or only that part of it attended to which prepares for a successful conduct in this world; where parents are little solicitous concerning the

examples which are presented to their children's observation, the seeds of grace are killed before they have germinated, the spark is extinguished before it has been able to grow into a flame. Spiritual life is cruelly destroyed in its immature state, and is succeeded by a dismal death; the death of all those sensibilities which preserve us alive to God, and to the blessed operation of the Holy Ghost; a death, which not only deprives us of our most desirable feelings during this mortal state, but which leads to the everlasting death of a soul intended to be immortal.

It is a most unfortunate circumstance attending this unhappy state, that the sufferer is insensible of the danger to which he is exposed. The state itself is, indeed, a perfect stupor, or delirium. He is fallen into a trance; and the various objects which he pursues, and which agitate his passions, are like the shadowy visions of a dream. He seeks wealth, pleasure, and honours, as if they were substantial and everlasting. If he succeeds in such vain pursuits, he deems himself completely happy; if he fails, completely miserable. Little does he think of other pleasures, other riches, other honours, in comparison with which, those of the world are despicable, its pleasures tasteless, its riches worthless, its honours disgraceful. The pleasures of devotion, the riches of grace, the honours which the King of kings can confer, never enter his thoughts, or excite his desire. If the ideas of such things should occur either in reading or in converse, he treats them with contempt, as the puerile conceits of a silly superstition. He is dead to Christ; but he is tremblingly alive to vanity. As the Holy Ghost forsakes him, an evil spirit enters in. He delights not to exercise himself in virtue, but finds ample scope for his activity in vice.

Fashionable folly fills his thoughts; and fashionable sin occupies his time, and employs all the faculties of his mind and body. He becomes enchained to sensuality. He has no other objects than the gratification of his passion. Pride and vanity hold a divided, yet despotic empire over him, and confine him in the bonds of a most ignominious servitude. The adversary of mankind marks him as his victim, and his misery begins even on this side the grave. That it may be infinitely aggravated beyond the grave, the scriptural representations afford us too much reason to forebode.

Shall we then be afflicted at the natural dissolution of a good man, and shall we not mourn over the melancholy condition of a fellow-creature who indicates every symptom of a spiritual death; *who is dead in trespasses and sins, wherein he walked, according to the course of this world?* Shall we spare no endeavours to secure, to preserve, to restore the health of a poor, frail, perishable body, and shall we be regardless of the soul's health? Shall we stand in perpetual fear of death, and have recourse to every art for the prolongation of animal existence, and shall we be totally indifferent on the subject of spiritual life? It becomes not the wise and brave to dread that event to which all created being is destined; but the death of the spirit, the extinction of the noblest of our constituent part—who but the man who is stupified by sin, can think himself in danger of it, and not tremble? Alas! he who has no fears concerning it, ought, on that very account, to be immediately alarmed. A numbness has seized him. A spiritual palsy is approaching, or a mortification begun. The physician of the soul announces the danger. Death has probably invaded him, and if not instantly repelled, will soon acquire a complete

dominion. Indifference is a certain sign of imminent danger, if not of actual perdition. In order to preserve the spiritual life, and to perpetuate the residence of the Holy Spirit within us, there is an absolute necessity for vigilance. The holy guest will not be neglected or coldly received. He requires to be fostered and cherished by devout attention. *For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing of God; but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.*

II. Let us then, in the second place, endeavour to prescribe such rules as may have a tendency to preserve or restore the life of *God in the soul of man;* a topic far worthier of attention than all the arts and prescriptions of health which the ingenuity of man can invent.—Let us seek the medicine of the soul, the restorative of the spirit, the dispenser of everlasting life.

In considering the likeliest means of preserving the heavenly blessing of grace, the first which occurs is habitual and fervent prayer. We have the strongest assurances in the scriptures, that prayer performed in a proper manner, and proceeding from a right disposition, shall be effectual. *If ye, being evil,* says our Saviour, *know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his* HOLY SPIRIT *to them that ask him?** But besides the beneficial tendency of prayer in procuring the blessings for which it supplicates, it has a most benign influence on the heart of the suppliant. It prepares it for the admission of good impressions, it fills it with good resolutions, it opens it for the reception of the Holy Ghost. He

* Luke xi. 13.

most assuredly cannot long be deserted by grace, or occupied by the evil one, who is regular and ardent in practising the duty of prayer. Prayer, indeed, as well as faith, constitutes the shield of the Christian. All the powers of darkness assault him in vain when protected by prayer. Temptation may commence an attack, but it will find him willing to oppose and able to conquer. It is therefore of the highest importance that young persons should be taught an uniform regularity in performing the duty of prayer. Let no one, in a more advanced age, and when he is emancipated from parental authority, lay aside the pious practice of adoring the Almighty at every return of morning and evening. *Them that honour me I will honour, but those that dishonour me shall be lightly esteemed.* If he suffers the example of the profane and profligate to banish from his mind the remembrance of his God, he may be assured that his God will withdraw the influence of the Holy Ghost from his heart; and from the neglect of prayer, let him date his destruction.

Temperance, or moderation in the indulgence of all the animal appetites, is highly conducive, if not absolutely necessary, to the preservation of the spiritual life. Gluttonous excess obscures the lustre, and blunts the acuteness, of our intellectual nature. It weighs down our soul to the earth. It pollutes its purity, and degrades it to a level with the body. He whose faculties are darkened with the fumes of indigestion, is unable to look up to Heaven, or behold its divine irradiation streaming from the Sun of Righteousness. Let him therefore who is solicitous to preserve the influence of the Holy Spirit in his heart, take heed to himself, lest at any time his heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness. *Be*

not overcome with wine in excess; but be filled WITH THE SPIRIT.

Innocence of life, or purity of morals, is essentially necessary to retain the soul in a state susceptible of grace. The bodies of true Christians are declared to be the temples of the Holy Ghost. How dreadful must be the sin of him who can venture so far to offend this divine Person, as to pollute the place chosen for his residence? He will turn from the heart in which defilement is lodged, and leave it for the habitation of those foul spirits who delight in impurity. *To be carnally minded, is death; but to be spiritually minded, is life. If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

It will also be necessary to the preservation of grace, that we restrain our hearts from an immoderate attachment to the world, and all its allurements. The Holy Ghost requires to be cherished with the ardour of an undivided affection. If he finds our hearts pre-occupied, so as to afford him but a cold and unwelcome reception, he will depart in displeasure. He will leave us to the direction of vain idols, which we have profanely erected in the temple, and before which we have foolishly fallen down in voluntary adoration.

The choice of company and conversation will ever be of great importance in conciliating, or in resisting, the grace of God. Infidels and libertines usually treat the whole doctrine of grace with ridicule. They are not unprovided with subtle arguments to shake the faith of weak or irresolute believers. The enemy of mankind, whose cause they undertake, is ever ready to assist them in contending against the Spirit of God. But the conversation and example of

good men contribute greatly to Christian edification.

It will conduce much to our continuance in a state of grace, if we are cautious of indulging the pride of our reason. Reason is certainly an incompetent judge in the mysterious subjects of religion. Learning must not, presumptuously, pretend to decide. *For we are but of yesterday,* and KNOW NOTHING; *because our days upon earth are a shadow.* We must not concern ourselves in fruitless inquiries into the mode in which the Holy Spirit is enabled to operate. We shall never discover, after all our disputations on the subject, *the secret things which belong unto the Lord.* But if we proudly drag them to the tribunal of our reason, we shall probably be led, by our presumption, to pronounce an unfavourable sentence on their pretensions to truth. Our vanity will be flattered with starting many doubts and difficulties, which we think, have eluded the sagacity of other inquirers. We shall be gradually seduced, by the deceitfulness of our hearts, not only to question the existence of a Holy Ghost, but the truth of Christianity. Such is the frequent effect of trusting to the dim light of human perceptions, in opposition to the revealed illumination of the Gospel. They who appear to have possessed reason in a high state of natural vigour and acquired improvement, have been fools, and blind to all the truths of the Christian dispensation.

I will only add to the number of virtues and habits which I have already recommended, as tending to the preservation of grace, those of Humility and Charity. Without these, all pretensions to Christian excellence are false and hypocritical. God resisteth the proud, and without charity there can be no grace.

It is certain that the methods which contribute to preserve, contribute likewise to restore a state of grace. Indeed, he whose heart is conscious of a sincere desire of being reinstated in the favour of God, has already made a considerable progress in the accomplishment of his purpose. Grace will come forth to meet him, whenever his aspirations after it are ardent, constant, and sincere. But his good resolutions and desires must not be transient; they must proceed from serious principles, and not from caprice, disappointment, or dejection.

He will find his pious intentions greatly confirmed, by regularly performing the public offices of religion. A constant attendance at church, a sincere and internal observation of fasts and ecclesiastical festivals, and a frequent participation of the holy communion, will add fresh vigour to his exertions. These will give him perseverance till he shall have formed a habit, and a habit once formed will secure his growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He may now be congratulated. He is risen from the dead. Light is broken in upon his darkness. His heart, which was lately dull and heavy within him, now glows with the fervour of devotion. Impenetrable to religious sentiment as the clod, before his re-animation, he now trembles with the sensibility of affectionate and reverential piety. His soul rises from its slumber, feels new life, new powers, new spirit, and on the wings of faith soars to heaven. Heaven rejoices over the repenting sinner, and sheds its all enlivening influence in showers of grace, to encourage his progress in the path that leads to happiness and glory. A soul is saved; angels rejoice, and ministering spirits around the throne sing Hallelujahs.

III. When we turn our attention to the world, how many do we observe, for whom there is every reason to fear that they are dead in a spiritual sense, dead to God, dead to Christ, and dead to the influences of the Holy Ghost. I shall address a short exhortation to them, hoping that it may be efficacious on the hearts of some among great numbers, and that it may call a few from the sleep of death.

Awake, says the word of God, *thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.* Hear this friendly voice, thou that devotest thyself to the unceasing pursuit of nominal pleasure. Little dost thou know of thy real state. Thou hast not time enough to think of it, or of any thing serious. Some new diversion, or some fashionable pleasure, is devised for every day, and for every hour. Thou art whirled in the vortex of dissipation. All is hurry and confusion. But thou art not sensible of thy danger. While thou art countenanced by thy companion, while thou preservest the distinction of fashion, thou remainest in complete security. Thou art allowed to be a man of spirit, and to make a figure equal to thy rank in life. Thou therefore concludest that all is well. With respect to religion, it is too dull for thy attention, and thou hearest it frequently ridiculed by the wits into whose company thou art admitted. Thou also discernest, that the most fashionable writers have espoused the cause of infidelity. It is enough. Thou must also be in the fashion, even though it should endanger thy immortal existence. Thou must also be a wit, since the character is so easily gained by blasphemy. Alas! poor mortal! thou art an object of the sincerest commiseration! Lively and gay as is thy appearance, vigorous as thy health, active as thy exertions, thou art already in the arms of death; sunk in a spiritual

slumber, from which it is too probable that, without an effort of thine own, thou wilt only rise to hear the sentence of perdition! Thou art forsaken by grace, and given over to thy own will; a dereliction equivalent to the actual curse of that Almighty God who made thee, and gave thee all the delights in which thy soul rejoices to revel. Pause a moment, and listen to the voice of reason and religion. If thou now refusest, it is devoutly to be wished that God in his mercy may send thee some calamity. The terrors of the Lord will be instances of his love. O that the preacher could rouse thee with the trump of the arch-angel, repeating that awful call, "Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

And ye also, who are engaged in the business of the world, who toil for gold with anxious solicitude, who deem yourselves happy when you have at last accumulated superfluous opulence, which you can never enjoy, and for which even your heir shall not thank you, little do ye know the most valuable purposes of life, and how completely poor you are without the riches of grace. You devote your time to lucre, and hesitate not to travel to both the Indies, to enlarge the boundaries of your traffic; but what, in the mean time, becomes of your spiritual life? Do you seek the proper methods of preserving yourselves in a state of grace; and of being restored to it if you have lost it? You are ready to answer, you have not time for superstition; you leave such things to the idle, to monks and priests, whose leisure they may amuse. You have no leisure. You are occupied in manly and important employments. We must not disturb you with notions which tend to interrupt the business of your husbandry, or of your merchandise.

But let us implore your attention for a moment. We will not interrupt you in your business. You say, with eager looks, it is of the utmost importance. Be it so. But we ask a few of those moments, in which you steal from your daily employment, and break the chains of your engagements. Vouchsafe, in these intervals, to think of your real state. You will find that it has become truly deplorable through want of attention, like your field or your garden when neglected. A spiritual death has seized upon you, and great exertions will be necessary to the restoration of your life. You say, you have no taste for devout duties. You have lost the habit of them. The very confession proves that you are insensible to the influences of the Holy Ghost. The natural man receiveth not the *things of the spirit; for they are foolishness unto him.** Awake, awake, arise from thy deep sleep, *now in this thy time,* lest the slumber of death should seal thine eyelids for ever. *Awake to righteousness and sin not, for thou hast not the knowledge of God;* and remember that *if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.*†

Ye also who devote yourselves, without one wish for the favour of God, to the pursuits of ambition, happy to obtain a title, a riband, an office of honour and confidence, by the unwearied attention of a life, beware, lest, if you proceed in your irreligious course, you lose all chance of honours in the kingdom of Heaven. Though you enjoy the smiles of a prince, and the acclamations of a people, yet if you seek not the favour of the King of kings, but grieve his Holy Spirit by neglect, you are already abased to the lowest degree, in the midst of your grandeur; *in the midst of life* and all its pomps and vanity, *you are in death.* Shake of the palsy, which has almost

* 1 Cor. ii. 14. † 2 Cor. iv. 3.

deprived you of your feeling, and seek for succour of the Lord.

Ye men of the world of whatever denomination, whether under the dominion of pleasure, avarice, or ambition, to you I call, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Listen while you have the power to hear. You have not perhaps heard *whether there be any Holy Ghost;* or if you have heard, peradventure you have ridiculed the idea. You have every symptom of spiritual death. You have sinned till you are past feeling, and till your consciences *are seared,* as it were, *with a hot iron.* You are alive only to this transitory world. Dreadful is your situation, whatever may be your worldly prosperity. You may have raised a fortune, ennobled a family, revelled in sensual pleasure; you may even have acquired a skill in liberal professions, and you may have acquitted yourselves with credit in that world to which you have been devoted; but, after all, without grace, you are mistaken, and miserable! You have been pursuing shadows, phantoms, visions, and have known nothing of the purposes for which you were sent into this transient state of probationary existence. What avails it, even if you have gained that world, which you have sought so ardently, but which you can enjoy but for a moment, if you have lost, in the pursuit, your soul's immortality? Men of the world, though they usually pride themselves on their wisdom, are of all men the most indiscreet. They pursue bubbles as realities. They exchange an inestimable jewel for a worthless bauble.

But what conduct do I mean to recommend? Does religion require that we should withdraw from the world, neglect its duties, and confine ourselves in a cloister? No; it requires nothing so unnatural. But it requires that, in every state and employment

of life, our private thoughts, at every interval, and especially when we lie down on our pillows, or rise from them, should be lifted up to Heaven. No state is so busy, as not to admit some leisure. While the hands are employed, the heart may be exercised in devotion. The grace of God may be drawn down upon us by a silent ejaculation. Regularity of devotional offices may be maintained under every change, chance, and employment; and the spiritual life preserved, amidst thousands of enemies, as the river was fabled of old to flow through the sea without commixture.

Extremes, however, are never wise. Extremes in religion are pregnant with madness and misery. *Be not righteous over-much*, says Solomon; *neither make thyself over-wise; why shouldst thou destroy thyself?*

And here I cannot help adverting to a sect of pious and devout persons among us, who, with the purest intentions, often fall into the error of those who are righteous over-much. I respect their zeal, I esteem the men, but I lament their errors. Their errors are of such a nature as to throw an unnecessary gloom over their own lives, and to render them less charitable in their opinions of their neighbours, than they ought to be as Christians, and as Christians of singular strictness in profession. Why should they torment themselves more than is conducive to wholesome discipline? Let them be contented with living up to the Gospel, without endeavouring, under the influence of a severe fanaticism, to go beyond it. To enjoy the blessings which God bestows, in moderation, is to obey. *Why shouldst thou destroy thyself*, in thy endeavour after a perfection which is not commanded, and which thou canst not attain? Some among the severer part of sects contend, and indeed are taught, that no sort

of gaiety, or mirth, no superfluous expense in dress or at the table, no ebullition of friendly conviviality, is allowable in any rank, or at any age—no sort of recreation or diversion—nothing but a dull, dismal, and austere life of perpetual mortification; no pleasure, but from religion only: yet God never required this of his creatures. If he had, in vain had Nature adorned every part of the world, and furnished a fine feast, a beautiful spectacle, for her favourite, Man. To taste the delicious flavour of a nectarine, or to inhale, with delight, the fragrance of a rose, must be, according to the rigid system of the fanatics, if their system is consistent with itself, unrighteous. But God never meant, if we may learn his will from his works, from the grand volume of the world, that religious pleasures should exclude social pleasures and natural pleasures, when enjoyment is directed by right reason, and controlled by moderation.

I have sometimes paused, to behold the crowd issuing from the thronged tabernacle; pale, emaciated, with hollow eyes and woeful countenances, they exhibit appearances, from which a Spenser might have depicted an allegorical famine and despair. And are these, said I to myself, the ardent votaries of religion, of which we are taught that *all its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace? The voice of joy and gladness,* I have read, *is in the dwellings of the righteous;* but in the dwellings of these men, all is sadness, sorrow, and melancholy. Among these men, not only health and pleasure, but cheerful industry, trade, mechanical labour, and prudential, domestic care, are totally neglected.

All this evil arises from what our divines term RIGHTEOUSNESS OVER-MUCH; but as it arises from the infirmity of human nature rather than its malignity,

it should always be treated with the lenity of compassion, not the insult of ridicule, or the bitterness of reproach; it should be considered as a distemper, where balsams and emollients will be more effectual than the knife or the caustic.

Instead therefore of sharply remonstrating against these fellow-creatures who appear to be mistaken, and who suffer for their mistake by self-inflicted punishment, I would call to them with a friendly voice, and invite them into the fold of the church, by convincing them that the pasture which they seek so eagerly is to be found there in abundance; pleasant herbage, not mixed with a predominant portion of wormwood; waters of comfort, not overhung by the willow; but adorned with flowerets, and surrounded with a cheerful landscape.

For their own sakes I regret the prevalence of rigid enthusiasm among them. The evils of life require the solace of temperate pleasure. I regret it also for the sake of their neighbours, and the church, established among us with great wisdom, and sanctioned by long experience. We are sorry to lose so many valuable brethren and companions. Why should they separate from us, and take so much pains to cause others to separate? Separation must, in the nature of things, be always attended with a little violation of the law of love; of that charity, which is better worth preserving among Christians, than all the theological opinions and speculative doctrines that were ever broached from the pulpit of a church, with a steeple or without one.

Our church, it appears, teaches the true scriptural doctrine of grace; a doctrine which they justly consider of the first importance.

Our church, I humbly maintain, affords every opportunity for a good mind to grow in Grace, and

in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ: A regular, well-educated clergy; order in all things; a splendour that becomes the house of God; sacred music; a stated provision for the poor; the laws of the country to establish it; every thing that conduces to the furtherance of piety to God, and love to man. It is a pleasant, cheerful service. But they who turn their backs upon us hate us, despise us, speak evil of us; which argues something of spiritual pride, a quality most adverse to the meek spirit of Christianity. Let us not retaliate; but kindly invite them to come into our fold, that we may be one flock under one shepherd, Jesus Christ.

O that I could prevail on Christians to melt down, under the warm influence of brotherly love, all the distinctions of Methodists, Independents, Baptists, Anabaptists, Trinitarians, Arians, Unitarians, in the glorious name of Christians; men of large, generous, benevolent minds, above disputing for trifles, men who love one another as men, sons of the same Almighty Parent, heirs of the same salvation by Jesus Christ! Let us throw away our petty badges of distinction; distinction, where, in fact, there is no difference; and let us walk together, hand in hand, into the church, up to the altar, and give and forgive, and love one another, and live in unity in this world, the few years poor mortals have to live, that we may meet in love, never again to be divided, in Heaven; where will no more be found the narrow, dark, cold, wretched prejudices of little sectaries, cavilling at each other, stinging their opponents, venting the virulence of their temper in defence of a religion that forbids, above every thing, all rancour, all malice, all evil-thinking, and all evil-speaking.

But one caution is necessary on our part. Let

us of the established church take heed, lest, to avoid enthusiasm, we fall into coldness, or lukewarmness; lest we be too little righteous, through a fear of being righteous over-much. But enough of caution. I trespass on your time.

Let us conclude, with representing to our minds, in the most lively manner, the infinite advantages of living in a state of Grace. To have within us, even in our hearts, an emanation of the Deity! to undergo *a renewing of our minds, a new creation, to become a new man.* To overcome the weakness of our nature introduced by the Fall; to regain our likeness to the image of God, according to which man was *created in righteousness, and true holiness.* In this state of darkness, wickedness, and misery, to be enlightened, sanctified and comforted by the spirit of truth! These are the glories of Christianity; these her honourable triumphs over the beggarly inventions of human wisdom.

Be it our constant care to keep our hearts open to those fertilizing showers of grace, which descend from heaven, and produce the blossoms of hope, the fruits of all virtue, and all happiness. Under its powerful influence, and refreshed by the streams flowing from the fountain of life, we shall *grow and flourish* in Christian perfection, like a tree planted by the water side. Let us sow of the spirit in the good soil of a good and honest heart; for we are expressly informed, that *he that soweth of the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;* and let us joyfully and gratefully remember, that, *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.*

And God grant that, forgetting all animosities, whether of religious sects or of private life, we may all taste the fruits of the Spirit—*love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance:* Lovely qualities, which must cause earth to anticipate that Heaven to which they lead.

SERMON IV.

CORRUPTION OF HEART THE SOURCE OF IRRELIGION AND IMMORALITY.

PSALM XCV. 10.—*It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.*

As worldly honour and emolument frequently attend superior abilities, many, who are by no means actuated by virtuous motives, eagerly pursue intellectual improvement, and all the ornaments of various erudition. A great number is urged up the steeps of science, by a principle of pride and self-interest. But this desire to improve the natural sagacity, and to enlarge the boundaries of knowledge, for the sake of worldly interest, is seldom accompanied with any solicitude for the melioration of the heart. Men who are justly anxious to become, and to be esteemed, able and learned, are too often indifferent on the subject of their moral and religious character. Let the world admire their wit, their acuteness, their strength of reason and depth of learning, and they regard not its opinion of their morals, any farther than it may be conducive to their interest to be externally decent and tolerably punctual in pecuniary negociations.

It is obvious to observe, that even in the common course of education much less attention is paid by many to the culture of the heart, than to the improvement of the understanding, and the acquisition of shining accomplishments. While a boy displays what is called a fine spirit in mischievous frolics, and makes a tolerable appearance in the studies of his school, some are unwise enough to admire instead of reprobating his propensity to evil. Such a propensity, if attended with a certain sprightliness of manners, is too often considered as a mark of genius, and a certain presage of future eminence; a fatal error, which tends to pollute life at the very fountain, and to infuse such impurity into all its progressive streams, as they may possibly carry with them into the ocean of eternity.

Every competent judge of that which makes and keeps us happy, must lament this conduct, as he must be convinced that more happiness arises to the individual and to society, from goodness of disposition, than from great parts and brilliant accomplishments. When they are all united in the same person, they greatly enhance each other's value; but if they are to be separated, it is certain that goodness of heart, rectitude of intention, meekness, innocence, and simplicity, are infinitely more desirable, than wit, eloquence, and erudition.

Those, indeed, whose hearts are right, will seldom fall into fatal or irretrievable mistakes, by the defects of their understandings, or of their acquired knowledge. It is the obliquity of the heart which causes the most frequent and most destructive instances of immorality and irreligion. *It is a people that do* ERR IN THEIR HEART, says the text, *and they have not known my ways;* a plain intimation, that an ignorance of the ways of God, of truth and virtue, is

commonly produced, by the corruption of the will and affections, and not by a want of intellectual ability. From these words I shall take occasion to enforce the necessity of cultivating the heart, in order to arrive at happiness and wisdom; and I shall endeavour to represent the effects of an *erring*, or bad heart, on our own happiness, the happiness of others, and our acceptance with God.

I. "The first vengeance on the guilty," said a heathen poet, "is that which is inflicted on his bosom by his own conscience." Notwithstanding the pains which the wicked take to deaden their sensibility, they cannot entirely divest themselves of it; and the malignity of their hearts will give them many a severe pang in the midst of their highest enjoyments, and throw a gloom over their minds in the day of their brightest prosperity. A righteous Providence has decreed that every bad man should be a self-tormentor.

But supposing the wicked to have arrived at that hardened state which enables them to stifle conscience, and to despise the pungency of remorse; yet their corrupted hearts are of themselves, independently of religious compunction, engines of perpetual self-torment. The badness of their hearts is, as it were, a serpent, which they carry in their bosom, and which stings and bites them in their softest moments of pleasure and repose. They bear their own hell within them; and if there were no other, would be punished enough by this, to evince the wisdom and happiness of him who has reformed his heart, and preserved it pure, by his own diligence co-operating with the assistance of divine grace.

Is there any mode of torture devised by the cruel ingenuity of man, comparable to the inward corrosions of envy? This vice, which is always prevalent

in a bad heart, turns all the brighter prospects of life into darkness, the fairest into deformity, and would of itself be sufficient to unparadise an Eden. *A sound heart is the life of the flesh,* says Solomon, *but envy the rottenness of the bones.*

Is it not certain, that anger, hatred, and malice, occasion more misery to those who entertain them, than to those against whom they are directed? The heart in which such dispositions have fixed their abode, is emphatically compared to a troubled sea. It has no rest. It foams, it is violently agitated with every blast, it is dashed against the rocks, it *casteth up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* But is there any happiness independent of peace? There may be mirth, and noise, and riot, and a violent ebullition of the animal spirits, but there cannot be any sincere enjoyment without tranquillity. It has pleased the benevolent Creator to render the malignant passions painful to the bosom which harbours them; evidently with a design to stimulate men to divest themselves of their influence, by suggesting the most powerful of all motives, those of self-interest and self-satisfaction. If you will persist in bearing hatred, anger, and malice, against those whom reason, nature, and religion, teach you to love, you shall be the first to suffer. So have ordained the law of nature, and the word of God. Miserable man that thou art, thou impotently and diabolically endeavourest to diffuse misery on all who are so unfortunate as to be connected with thee; but, by a just and merciful dispensation, it falls first, and principally, on thyself; a merciful dispensation, because it may chastise thee till thou art led to seek and to effect a reform in thy heart, a purification of that source from which happiness and misery must be derived.

A bad heart is always over-run with inordinate desires. Pleasure of the most sensual and the grossest nature is the most congenial to it. Hence it is continually involved in the stratagems of intrigue. Ten thousand cares and fears, unknown to the innocent, agitate and molest it. The pleasures which it is always pursuing, never fall to its share unpolluted, unalloyed, or uninterrupted. Loss of health, loss of fortune, loss of character, are always incurred by him who addicts himself to the intemperate or forbidden indulgences of sensuality. Jealousy and suspicion kindle a flame which tortures with caustic corrosion. Violent agitations of spirits are followed by dreadful languors and dejection. Repeated and incessant debauchery gradually divest the senses of their susceptibility. The organs of sensation become paralytic before their time; but the wantonness of desire is still destined to remain, as an anticipation of that torture which the Lord hath appointed for the *sensual and the devilish*. Inordinate lust is indeed a fire which scorches the heart in which it burns with infernal flames.

The whole life of him who is cursed with a bad heart, is one uniform tenour of deceit. But deceit implies and requires a continued succession of mean subterfuges and anxious cares. Many painful palpitations of heart must he endure, who is engaged in the prosecution of an artful scheme. He must impose on himself a continual restraint, for nature will be for ever revolting. He must pass many sleepless nights, and the pillow which is downy to the innocent, is to him a pillow of thorns. His art is usually discovered by those who converse with him, and he is consequently treated with peculiar reserve. Many take a pride and pleasure in defeating his enterprises. All who know him despise him,

and avoid his intercourse. He may, indeed, sometimes succeed in nefarious schemes by nefarious methods; but he pays dearly for his success, and is not able to enjoy it with pure satisfaction.

Selfishness in the extreme is always the striking characteristic of a bad heart. It is of bad-hearted men the scripture speaks, when it declares, that men *shall be lovers of their own selves.* But this selfishness, instead of procuring, as it intends, a greater share of good, converts the little good that falls to it into evil. Greediness seldom enjoys; for when it has obtained the object, it immediately pursues another. It is never satisfied. Whatever is highest, and whatever is best, appears, in the eyes of the selfish man, too low and too bad for his deserts. His vanity and conceit are unlimited. If any unexpected advantage befal him, he is not thankful for it; because he thinks his merits might have procured a better, or a larger share. Like some savage beasts of prey, he devours every thing he can reach, yet never fattens on the spoil.

It were endless to enumerate the particular circumstances which confirm the remark of the heathen poet, that "no bad man is happy," and the declaration of the scriptures, *that there is no peace for the wicked.* From what has been already said, it sufficiently appears, that Providence has decreed that a bad heart shall, even in this world, become a scourge to its wretched possessor. It is invariably found to embitter every sweet, to render prosperity joyless, and adversity unsupportable.

II. But a bad heart is destructive of all social happiness no less than of personal. It acts the part of Satan among mankind. It goes about, seeking whom it may devour.

That envy, which corrodes itself, stops not there.

It is perpetually endeavouring to destroy the peace of others, and too often succeeds. It is pleased to defeat any laudable purpose, and to disappoint any reasonable expectation. Calumny and detraction are its constant employment. It delights to shoot arrows in the dark; and many a cruel wound is inflicted on those who expect no enemy, because they deserve none. Indeed, the virtue, innocence, and consequent good character of others, excite all its rancour and resentment. Men of virtue and probity, who deserve and possess the good opinions of those who know them, are thus mortified and injured by aspersions, which though the feeblest hand can throw upon a character, the strongest cannot entirely remove.

The dissensions which subsist among mankind, and poison the sweets of society, are usually occasioned by the secret machinations of a bad heart. Like Satan, as he is represented by the poet of Paradise Lost, the bad-hearted man cannot bear to look on scenes of love. He whispers the tales of the backbiter in the ear of two parties, under the pretence of kindness to each; and thus raises a degree of distrust, which soon terminates in a lasting animosity. He starts a topic of conversation, or revives a forgotten story, which brings to mind an old dispute, and occasions a new one. Mischief is his delight, and he is never better pleased than when he has caused a misunderstanding between two worthy persons, and then left them to do each other material injury, in the ardour of their resentment.

In the gratification of his animal passions he pays no attention to the rights of hospitality; he feels no pity for unsuspecting innocence. He cares not, though he rob a family of its peace for ever. He is ready to betray and destroy all who place any confidence in his pretended honour. The more mischief

attends the prosecution of his criminal purposes, the more is he delighted with them. It is this, indeed, which in his base and corrupted heart, appears to add the highest relish to his fancied enjoyments. As he is certainly of a degraded nature, so his pleasures are evidently brutal. Unfortunate are they who fall victims to his seduction; for they are sure to meet with insult, as well as injury. Their calamity is constantly aggravated by wanton and unnecessary ill-usage, and there is little doubt, but that, if the consequence of human laws could be avoided, the wretch would add to every cruel outrage, the last sad work of human malice, even murder.

His avarice is so great, that it precludes justice. Wherever he can defraud with secresy, be assured that no ties of that false honour to which he pretends, will restrain his inclination. Is he trusted as the guardian of orphans, whose fond parents have chosen him for the protector of their defenceless offspring? he is the first to violate their property. Is he in any respect confided in? his first endeavour is to promote his private interest by the abuse of confidence. There is no kind of business or engagement in which you can be connected with him, but you will find yourself embarrassed and injured by his artifices. It is, indeed, his interest to keep up good appearances in the world, and therefore he will only rob your purse or pocket when he can do it clandestinely.

If we take an actual survey of life, and trace the moral evil and consequent misery of it to their true sources, we shall find them all originating from the impure fountain of a bad heart. There are, indeed, natural evils in abundance; but they would be easily supportable, if they were not infinitely aggravated

and increased by external and acquired corruption. It is not the violence of storms and tempests, nor the inclemency of seasons, nor any other physical irregularity, which destroys the happiness of human nature. It is the monsters and eccentricities which appear in the heart of man, which lead him from the path of reason, which darken the light with which God illuminated his breast, which degrade the native dignity of his being, and confound him with the beasts that perish, or rather with the evil spirits that live to diffuse sin and woe.

Indeed there is every reason to believe, that as the human heart may, by Divine grace, partake of the Divine nature, it may also, when deserted by grace, assume something of the diabolical. The powers of darkness must be allowed by all who believe in Christianity, to have great influence over the heart of man; and what we denominate a bad heart, is certainly such an one as is occupied by evil spirits, on the desertion of the Holy Ghost the sanctifier.

III. This leads to the third topic of the discourse on which it was proposed to display the effects of a bad heart in the affairs of religion.

Infidelity is much more frequently occasioned by badness of heart, than any conviction of the reasoning faculty. An *evil heart* of unbelief, is a very striking expression of the Holy Scriptures. When the heart is corrupt, the understanding is darkened; and that part of the soul which was formed to perceive spiritual truth, loses its sensibility. It is dead; but the death is occasioned by itself; a kind of suicide, which infinitely aggravates the misfortune. In this wretched state, the whole plan of revelation, and every part of the Gospel, appear to it as the dream of superstition. At the same time, entertaining a surmise that, after all, the Gospel may be true, and envying the

happiness which it promises, those who receive it as true, the bad heart endeavours to divest them both of their belief and their hope.

Experience confirms this observation; for what kind of men have they been who have written against Christianity? They have indeed been subtle, and sometimes furnished with a considerable share of human learning; for though their powers of perception are dead to spiritual things, they are yet able to make a proficiency in the comparatively poor accomplishment of human erudition. But examine the history of their private lives, or learn their temper and spirit from the style and sentiments of their worship, even where religion is not concerned, and you will find indubitable marks of pride, vanity, and malevolence. You will also find them libertines in some moral principles; but extenuating the guilt of them, or rather recommending them obliquely, whenever they can make an opportunity.

Their whole views being confined to this world, they have no higher object than human praise. Distinction flatters their pride. They are satisfied, if, by their singular opinions, or bold assertions, they can render themselves important enough to become the topic of conversation. They swell in their own eyes, and immediately assume the name and air of philosophers, or correctors of the errors and prejudices of mankind. But that their motives are not those of philanthropy, to which they pretend, is evident, from the manner in which they speak of those mistakes which they undertake to rectify. They do not treat them with compassion, but with ridicule and malignity. If they were really humane, they would commiserate errors in which so many are involved. Indeed, I believe, they would rather permit them to pass without animadversion;

for they cannot but know that these very *follies*, as they are pleased to call them, which they censure with the utmost asperity, are to a very considerable part of the human race, a source of solid consolation. Their pretensions to liberality, generosity, benevolence, and whatever is amiable, are but the *cloaks* of their *maliciousness;* of that maliciousness which arises from a bad heart, from a heart possessed and governed by the influence of an evil spirit.

But those who maintain the cause of infidelity in their writings, are few, compared to others, who profess and propagate it by their lives and conversation. In this age, when the writings of sceptics are communicated by numerous vehicles to the lowest orders, it is very common to meet with disputers against Christianity, even among the vulgar. But mark the men. Are they such as are honest and industrious in their calling, sober and regular in their lives, or respected in their neighbourhood? By no means. They are men who have every symptom of a bad heart. They are idlers, drunkards, debauchees, gamesters, bad husbands, bad fathers, bad servants, useless or injurious in every relation. They are distinguished by impudence and insolence, enemies to order, delighting in affronting their superiors, and ready, if their power seconded their inclination, to destroy the distinctions of learning, virtue, opulence, and rank, to level all to their own standard, or rather to erect themselves into tyrants by the exertion of brutal force. Such usually are infidels in the lower walks of life; and their deeds amply evince, that neither the fear of God nor of men is before their eyes. Disciples these, who do honour to their illustrious instructors, the *modern philosophers and correctors of prejudices.* I appeal to experience. It

is not uncommon, in the present age, to hear the lowest mechanics dispute the authenticity of the Mosaic account of the creation, controverting the possibility of the deluge, and laughing at the mysteries of revelation. They appear, indeed, both in their conduct and their arguments, to be apt scholars of such sages as a Mandeville, and a Bolingbroke.

In the middle ranks there is, perhaps, less infidelity, than in the lowest or the highest. But there also it abounds, and exhibits additional proofs that it arises from corruption of heart. It will be difficult, I believe, to recollect an instance, of a professed and confirmed infidel, who has not afforded abundant proofs that he is a bad man. He cannot bear that Christianity should be true, because, if it is, he cannot practise some favourite vice, or avail himself of some fraudulent advantage. He wishes to be emancipated from the chains of conscience. He finds a deviation from the rules of moral and religious rectitude necessary to the accomplishment of his purposes. He enrolls himself, therefore, among the scholars of some scoffer at religion, who is the fashionable writer of the day. Or, if he happens to be no reader, which is frequently the case, he proposes some unbelieving man of rank and distinction, as a model for his imitation. His bad heart naturally leads him to admire opulence and splendour, and from these appearances, he is tempted to form a judgment of rectitude, much more than from any reasoning or internal sentiments of propriety. Unfortunately, too many in the higher ranks, afford lamentable, though brilliant examples, of daring immorality and irreligion; and the middle ranks are more frequently misled by such false shining lights, than by sceptical argumentation.

What characters do the great men of this world

bear, who have avowed themselves the patrons of infidelity? Have they not usually exhibited every mark of a bad heart, of a diabolical and infernal nature? Have they not been gross in their pleasures; destroyers of domestic peace; blood-thirsty duellists; insolent, overbearing, and oppresive neighbours? Have they not been fomenters of faction and war, or mean instruments of arbitrary power for the sake of aggrandizing themselves and their families? Ready to blaspheme their God, for the entertainment of their sycophantic company; have they not shown themselves equally ready to betray their country for their own emolument? Every part of their conduct has displayed the very qualities which characterise the prince of darkness. Nor let any one call these representations uncharitable. They are certainly true, and the Christian preacher is bound to *cry aloud and spare not*, without respect to persons. Infidelity and immorality in high stations are so peculiarly injurious by the influence of example, that they can never be too frequently stigmatised with the infamy they deserve. The deformity of a bad heart must not be disguised by the external glitter of a star, nor the purple robe of power.

Infidelity is, indeed, too often in all ranks, both the cause and the effect of a corrupted heart. But true Christianity and a bad heart are incompatible. By badness of heart I have never meant the occasional lapses which may be caused by sudden passion, or by the infirmity of nature. I comprehend under that description, a settled, habitual, and voluntary depravity; a disposition entirely hardened, and deeply corrupted by pride, envy, hatred, malice, lust, and avarice. He who unfortunately owns such a complication of wickedness, cannot be a Christian. He is in a state of

reprobation. He is given over to the evil one. He is truly a demoniac, and none can cast out the devils from his heart but Jesus Christ.'

What then remains, but that he seek to become a new creature by regeneration? He is dead in trespasses and sins. He must be born again, in order to live to God.

But this renewal of a right spirit within him, must be partly the result of his own efforts, as well as of the consequent operation of the Holy Ghost. The prime object is to teach his stubborn knees to bow, and his hardened heart to melt.

The first advice to be given is, that he encourage the very slightest tendencies to religious sensibility. Under any great loss, in violent pain, on the death of a near relation or valuable friend, there usually arise, even in the worst of hearts, some feelings of a devotional nature. They are often so slight as to pass away with little notice. But these are dawnings of a future day, unless the sun is set to rise no more. They must therefore be encouraged, and the best method of encouraging them is to seek solitude, to avoid the haunts of dissipation, and the usual pursuits of profit and pleasure, and to read such books as have a tendency to rekindle the latent sparks of piety.

These emotions, thus encouraged, will return with additional vigour. They must be still cherished, like a grain of mustard seed, which is at first diminutive, but, nourished by the genial power of the earth, and refreshed by showers, becomes a large plant. Good thoughts, and good resolutions, faint and imperfect at first, gradually advance to a high state of improvement by cultivation.

Pleasure always attends the consciousness of improvement. Thus what was begun with pain, is

continued with delight. God Almighty, who rejoices over one sinner that repenteth, sends down the benign influence of his grace, to assist him in the arduous work of a late reformation.

Faith gradually grows up in his mind. The veil is withdrawn from his heart. The darkness and shadows of death pass away as soon as the Sun of Righteousness dawns upon the soul. Faith and repentance produce a renovation of the whole man, and he who was lost and fallen, is raised and restored to the favour of his Redeemer.

But, without constant care and vigilance, all may be lost again. Prayer and pious meditation are necessary to keep the heart from relapsing into its former impurity. The heart is deceitful above all things, and therefore will require to be above all things carefully superintended. The fire just lighted, and scarcely burning, will be again extinguished, without a constant supply of proper fuel, and frequent resuscitation. It will be necessary, therefore, that he who has made so valuable a proficiency as to know the state of his corrupted heart, and to desire its amendment, should strengthen his resolution by frequently partaking of the holy communion, and by engaging in all other offices of the church, which are wisely established as the means of grace, and to promote edification.

Our God is a merciful God. If it were not so, who could abide his judgment? But mercy is the attribute in which he chiefly delights. However bad therefore our hearts have been, if we sincerely turn unto him at last, he will not be extreme to mark what has been done amiss. He will receive us as the father of the prodigal son in the gospel. But yet his justice is singular as well as his mercy, and if we neglect so great salvation, after having fre-

quently been warned of our wickedness and danger, there is every reason to believe that we may be excluded for ever, and that our portion may be among those evil spirits whom we have imitated and resembled in all our conduct during this state of probation. Turn ye, therefore, without a moment's delay, from the error of your ways. From the gloomy, rugged path that leads to death and destruction, turn to light, happiness, and glory. Begin to-day, while it is called to-day, and let no worldly business or pleasure erase from your heart the impressions you may have now received by the humble instrumentality of the preacher. Put your hand to the plough and turn not back.

I will conclude with entreating the younger part of those who hear me, to begin early *to keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.* They cannot yet be habitually corrupt. They may indeed have evil tendencies, but they cannot yet be hardened and confirmed in them. Remember, young man, in thy youth, that it is easier to prevent than to cure. Check the progress of the slightest taint, for you cannot but know that a speck of rottenness will soon pervade the fairest fruit which nature has produced. Be constant and regular in your prayers. Attend to the advice of your parents and instructors. Let no gaiety or schemes of pleasure seduce you from the wing of those whom nature and reason have appointed to foster you, till you shall have arrived at maturity. Love truth, and practise the strictest equity in your pecuniary concerns, however trifling they may be. A little leaven leaveneth a great lump, so a little dishonesty, or evil of any kind, cherished in your heart in early youth, will overspread it in the age of manhood. Blessed are ye while ye retain the

innocence and simplicity of children. Fools may call it folly, and the world may despise and neglect it; but be assured, that infantine simplicity, and innocence of heart, were the qualities in which our Saviour took delight, and that he will reward these with the kingdom of heaven. To those *who err in their hearts, and have not known his ways,* through the pride and obstinacy of human wisdom, however learned, opulent and exalted they may be, however esteemed for abilities and knowledge in this world, he will say, *Depart from me, ye cursed.* How different and how sweet will be the other sentence, *Come, ye blessed children of my Father,* ye pure in heart, *inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?*

Take heed, therefore, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day: lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; while it is said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. Heb. iii. 12.

SERMON V.

AGAINST DESPAIR AND SUICIDE.

JEREMIAH, XVIII. 12.—*And they said,* THERE IS NO HOPE; *but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.*

SUCH is the sullen and gloomy resolve of minds under the influence of despair; a despair that often

leads to the last sad catastrophe of human woe, self-assassination.

It is said by foreigners, that our countrymen are peculiarly prone to melancholy, and all its wretched consequences. It is but too true, that instances of despair and suicide abound in the happiest nation in the globe. Despair and suicide—dismal subjects indeed! but when there are hopes of affording relief, what good physician is deterred from his duty by the loathsomeness of an object, or the difficulty of an operation? And what mortal now assembled within these walls, however healthy, wise, or opulent, knows what sorrows and miseries may be his lot in life; into what sins and infirmities he may fall before he has finished his course; whether his reason may not die before him, whether the fine fibres of his brain may not be deranged by casualty or disease, whether the whole system of his nerves may not give way, and cause insanity or idiotism? for the human body, like a stringed instrument of music, if the master's hand for one moment turn the screw in the wrong direction, becomes totally relaxed, and retains only the lifeless form of a disarranged machine.

And let no man presume to say he has no interest in the discussion of such a subject. How little did many excellent men in our own memory, men of enlightened minds, virtuous dispositions, affluent circumstances; men honoured in their generation; how little did they deem that they should finish their illustrious career prematurely, with their own hand, by a cord, a razor, a pistol, a pool, or a poisoned phial? Almost every day's paper of intelligence brings an instance of suicide!

In truth, neither riches, grandeur, learning, nor unassisted virtue, can give stability to the mind of man in the hour of his infirmity. When the

prospect around is darkened, and frightful forms start up before the disordered imagination, religion only, the religion of Christ only, is capable of restoring that perpetual cheerfulness, of preserving that constant equilibrium, that cool, rational, dispassionate frame, which precludes despondency. When the sun of Faith arises in the heart, it diffuses a sun-shine around, tinges every object with the gayest hue, and causes every thing to be seen in its genuine shape and colour.

To the sanctuary of religion, therefore, I mean to invite the erring crowd who say THERE IS NO HOPE; who have pierced themselves through and through with many sorrows, amidst the briars of the world, and the thorns of false philosophy. I exhort them to listen to that friendly voice, which in accents sweeter than music to the ear of man, invites them, saying, *Come unto me all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.*

In the eyes of imagination, I picture to myself a crowd of mortals, straying from the path of peace, and lost in a wilderness over-shadowed with the darkest foliage. The cypress and the yew-tree form the gloomy grove. I will advance a few steps, and speak to the forlorn wanderers. Peradventure they are not too far gone to admit of a return. Some of them I see standing on the brink of deep and sombrous pools, overhung by weeping willows, just on the point of leaping forwards; others, in solitary recesses, armed with daggers, furnished with halters, and cups of poison. As there is still life, there is still hope. I will call to them. Their lot may be mine, may be that of the happiest of us all, the fairest, the youngest, the richest, in this congregation. Let us run and rescue the sufferer from perdition!

Stay, stay thy footstep, mistaken brother, who standest on the margin of that dark pool. Think not thy misfortunes too heavy to be borne. At least impart them to a faithful ear. Yes; I hear thy murmur. Thou art reduced, on a sudden, from affluence to poverty. Thou canst not dig, to beg thou art ashamed.—For this then thy soul refuses to be comforted, and, in a melancholy hour, thou hast taken the dreadful resolution of plunging into a watery grave. Before thou fallest, and the waters are gone over thy head; before thou art gone hence and art no more seen, pause a while; and in that awful pause, fall upon thy knees and pray, and say, *Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.* Thou canst not, it seems, bend thy stubborn knees! Thou hast not been accustomed to religious acts! Reluctant as thou art, yet obey my voice. The very time which thou spendest in this exercise, will contribute to cool that rage which has driven thee beyond the restraint of reason. Ask for grace, and it shall be given thee, for there is one,—a Friend, a Father, who only waits for thy return to him, and is more ready to hear than we to pray.

And now thy passion, which represented every thing misshapen and discoloured, has a little subsided, let me expostulate a moment, with all the tender solicitude of brotherly love. It was, then, the fear of poverty, which reduced thee to this dreadful degree of despair. The haggard spectre, clothed in rags, affrighted thee, and drove thee, all pale and trembling, to yonder precipice. It seems, then, that POVERTY, in thy estimation, is the sorest of evils, and what the philosopher called the most formidable of all formidable things, DEATH, is to be preferred to it. Thy mistake was great. Poverty,

with health, is capable of all real happiness. By virtuous industry thou mayest acquire a decent maintenance, and, by patience and contentment, be happier than in the day of thy thoughtless prosperity. Seek in religion that comfort which the world denies thee. Reason, philosophy, and experience, will unite to teach thee, that poverty is by no means such an evil as can justify the least degree of despair. Consider the poor with attention. View their countenances and behaviour. They appear to be equally cheerful with the rich, often more so. Withdraw thy step then from the gloomy path that leadeth to death, lay hold on Jesus Christ before thou sinkest, return to thy house and family—be contented, be happy and be thankful.

A little time elapses, and now let me ask you, was not thy misery as a dream of the night; a shadowy spectre conjured up by a temporary phrensy; an air-formed phantom? Awake in the morning, and see the bright sun-beams breaking into thy chamber-window; the bells from yonder village spire, that glistens in the sun-shine, redouble their cheerful peals; the birds twitter from thy roof; the playful school-boys shout with the voice of joy and gladness; the hammer of industry clatters on the anvil; all is joyous, gay, and lively around. Thus heaviness may endure for a night, but joy, you see, cometh in the morning. Thy heart dances in unison, and thou goest forth to the labours and pleasures of many-coloured life, not without surprise that thou couldst ever think of leaving the pleasant scene, to plunge into the dark waters, in the valley of the shadow of death.

But I have hitherto considered only one of the evils which occasion despondency, the fall from opulence to penury. The fear of want is, however,

but one among the grisly troop of phantoms that frighten the wretched to the gulf of despair.

Once more I look forward, and see, in fancy's eye, a numerous tribe succeed, with folded arms, with bloodless, woe-worn cheeks, and hollow eyes, that lack their lustre. There stands the disappointed lover, with a dagger uplifted at his bare bosom; and thou, poor luckless maiden, betrayed by villainy, forsaken or crossed by avarice, in thy first pure virtuous affection, weaving garlands for thy love, and singing the frantic song, while thou formest the fatal noose! There the gamester, with haggard looks, and eyes that glare distraction, with a pistol at his head! and there the poor religious enthusiast on his knees, his beads and prayer-book in one hand, and a knife pointed at his throat in the other! there also the haughty unfeeling infidel, with an air of defiance, coolly drinking the bowl of hemlock, and hurling, as it were, in the face of heaven, its choicest, best gifts, with contempt and indignation.

Sons and daughters of affliction—co-heirs with me in all the frailties, infirmities and miseries which flesh inherits—list! O list one moment—before you venture on an act, which never can be recalled, and the consequences of which may be dreadful beyond all description and all conception.

If you have no regard for yourselves, have you no relatives, whom you love, and to whom you are dear? Is there no sweet prattling babe, whom you have brought into a world, which you confess to be miserable, and whom you are going to leave in it, an orphan, to the cold protection of charity? Is there no parent, whose grey hairs you will bring with sorrow to the grave?—no partner whose heart will feel the wound you inflict yourself with tenfold

anguish ! no friends, no family, whom you will involve in disgrace as well as woe !

I only ask of you at first, time for recollection. Let your passions grow cool; and let your present ideas be changed by shifting the melancholy scene. You will soon see your rashness in its true light, and shudder at the danger which you have just escaped. Away with the sharpened steel, the opiate drug, the poison, and the halter, and lift up the hands that held them, and were on the point of destroying life —to the Giver of life, to the Giver of every comfort of life; continue instant in prayer, and presently the sun-shine of grace shall shine in the benighted chambers of your heart. Light and warmth shall return where all was cold and dismal; welcome as the first sun-beam that broke into the subterraneous dungeon of some breathing skeleton, on the demolition of a Bastile. Go to thy God in thy distress, as the wailing infant to the nurse's breast, and there recline, and smile in sweet repose, till all is hushed in peace.

And now the paroxysm is passed, let us commune together. The time will not permit me to address each of you separately; but as your error is similar in its origin and consequences, a general address may be applicable to you all. You are recovered from the temporary phrensy of your passion, and I will therefore venture to apply, in the first place, to your reason.

I approach you, unhappy brethren, with respect. Great tenderness is due to your infirmity. Sacred be your sorrows; unexplored the cause, but by God and your own consciences ! But I doubt not, there is something of bodily disorder blended with your mistakes; and the aid of medicine may be necessary

to co-operate with reason, in the removal of your mental malady. The suicide who falls into the extremity of woe from mistakes in religion, is an object of peculiar compassion. You are all, perhaps, more the objects of pity than of censure, except the philosophical infidel, who defends suicide by arguments, and publishes to his fellow-creatures persuasives to the practice. The ridicule of such attempts is lost in the horror of them.

Notwithstanding the sophistry of a Hume and his admirers, you must all know that self-murder is against the law of nature, against the laws of your country, and against the laws of God. To prove this were to waste time. Common sense wants no proof, and sophistry will admit none.

What have you, mistaken mortals, to urge in your defence? Nature, reason, law, religion, are against you. You have nothing to offer but your *feelings*, which, you urge, are intolerable; Feelings! a fashionable word, substituted for mental operations, and savouring much of materialism. You feel yourselves wretched in the extreme, and seek relief in non-existence.

But let me persuade you to compare yourselves, and situation, with others; with your inferiors, with the greater crowd of the more miserable. Feel a little for others that are confessedly wretched; and your own woes will appear diminished, or annihilated, on the comparison. Think of the poor sable sons of woe in the West Indies; of the sons, did I say? think of the poor sable daughters of woe, for the tender sex is little spared, driven by whips to work under a vertical sun, allowed but little rest after severe labour, and fed scantily. Think of all their sufferings which you have heard so lately

described in the British senate, where worldly policy and mercantile interest superseded for a time only the plainest dictates of humanity, and the most express precepts of Jesus Christ, who was sent to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and to set at liberty them that are bruised with an iron rod, in a state of slavery, without hope of release or alleviation.

Many of you, it is to be feared are impatient of trifling evils, and resentful under slight provocations. In a fit of rage you wreak your vengeance on yourselves. It is not that your reason is convinced, that the evil which oppresses you cannot be removed, but that your *temper* will not bear it. Depend upon it, a little time would mitigate the ferocity of your temper, remove the evil, or at least render it tolerable. Evils, granting that they are real, wear themselves, like water, smooth channels by long continuance. Habit is wonderfully efficacious in giving the mind a power to bear its miseries. Habit blunts the edge of them. The great point is to bear the first attack, not to be so stunned by a blow, as to lose all power of self-defence. It is in the first fits of your passion, that many of you fall into despair. Cultivate self-command, cultivate humility, cultivate the milder affections, submit to your reason and your conscience, be a Christian, and be happy.

Be a Christian, I say, and be happy. You have heard what comfortable words our Saviour saith to all those who truly turn to him—*Come unto me, all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.* Hither then, ye distressed and mistaken tribes, repair, in your distress, to your friend and physician, who will send his Paraclete, the Holy Ghost

the Comforter, to give you a spiritual joy in your hearts, which the busy, dissipated world knows little of, and can neither give nor take away.

Let us recapitulate thy complaints then, and apply the sovereign remedy, the grand medicine of the human soul in all its maladies. Does poverty come upon thee like an armed man? Fear him not, when thou art clad in the panoply or complete armour of Christianity. Does hapless love cast down thy soul? Set thy affections on things above, and thy heart shall feel no comfortless void, but be filled with all joy in believing. Have thy vices, thy passions, thy gaming, thy gluttony, thy drunkenness, brought thee to shame? Repent—sacrifice them all to Jesus Christ, and there shall be joy in heaven over thee; and there shall be joy in thine own bosom, such as thy vicious indulgences never gave thee in the hour of juvenile intoxication.

Come unto me, says the Redeemer. O give ear, ye melancholy wanderers, listen to his voice, and turn from the gay vanities of the world. It may be, you have loved the world too well; if it were not so, ye would not be so deeply affected with the loss of any part of it, or indeed with any thing which happens in it. But ye thought not of heavenly things; ye were ingulphed in earthly things, and ye have found them, as all others have done who have trusted in them, delusive and unsatisfactory! Ye never could have been reduced to despair, if ye had taken refuge in sound and rational religion, because such religion cherishes HOPE, as an essential principle; hope of the assistance and comfort of God under all afflictions, and hope of a better state in a better world.

Come unto Jesus Christ then, and go not to those deceivers, who are themselves perhaps deceived, but who certainly delude the world by false philosophy.

Would any one have supposed it possible, that writers would have arisen to maintain the lawfulness of suicide, and to recommend the practice of it? I say nothing of an old divine of our church,* who, with good intentions, was egregiously mistaken; but recent times have produced a Hume, who puts a dagger into our hands, that we may plunge it into our bosoms, with all the coolness of what is called a philosophical insensibility. Avoid such books, as you would shun a pestilential contagion. Not that they carry conviction with them; they are absurd; but they are dark and subtle, and if you are in a melancholy mood, or have a predisposition to scepticism and wickedness, they may tempt you to say, in the words of the text—*There is no hope; but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.*

Turn from such seducers, and come to Jesus Christ. Ye have erred and strayed like lost sheep; but the kind shepherd, not easily provoked, still calls you to his friendly fold. He abandons none who has an inclination to return. He draws them gently with the cords of love. O taste and see how good he is! He would not that any should perish; why then will ye perish, O ye of little faith, as well as of little hope?

While ye listen to the voice of your shepherd, attend also to his example. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. The iron entered into his soul, and he sweated, as it were, great drops of blood. Which now among you, who lament so wofully, and wish to imbrue your hands in your own blood, has suffered as he suffered, he in whom was no sin? But what are his words in the extremity of his anguish? *Father, if thou be willing,*

* The celebrated Dr. Donne.

remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done. He resigned himself into the hands of him whose goodness is equal to his power, leaving us an example of patience amidst the severest pangs of which human nature is susceptible.

In the school of affliction, many of the most amiable, honourable, and useful virtues are best acquired. Humility, patience, resignation, are not taught in the circles of fashionable life, nor in the volumes of fashionable philosophy; but in the school of affliction, where Christ is the great instructor. The Christian scholar there learns, that he is to bear his cross, and to be tried by afflictions, as gold is proved in the furnace. When dejected and oppressed, he denies not the superintendence of Providence, he arraigns not the goodness of his Maker. He accepts his trials thankfully, and seeks improvement from them in wisdom and virtue, which was the genuine effect intended to be produced. He says within himself, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes, O Lord; for before I was afflicted I went wrong; but now I have kept thy word. In patience he possesseth his soul; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. Wherefore he girdeth up the loins of his mind, is sober, and hopeth to the end. He casteth not away his confidence, but taketh joyfully the spoiling of his goods, knowing in himself that he hath in heaven a better and an enduring substance.*

Instead of attempting to precipitate his own death, he makes it the business of his life to prepare for that hour when God shall take him to himself by disease, and the decays of age. He considers, that to leave the world with all his sins on his head unrepented of, with all his worst passions violently agitated, like

those of the suicide, is not the likeliest means of gaining admission to the realms of eternal bliss and uninterrupted tranquillity. To die well, furnishes a happy presage of a glorious resurrection from the dead, and a presumptive proof that the soul is not unfit for the heaven to which it aspires.

A calm death, such as the divines have called Euthanasia, is necessary to crown and complete a good life. It is like lying down in peace on our pillow at the close of a well-spent day. Away then with all the bloody weapons, all the tragical apparatus of the mistaken suicide. Let us take up in their place, the Bible and the Prayer-book, and knowing our own weakness, pray for strength from above, and learn by faith, hope, and charity, to rejoice evermore.

The gradual decays of nature, the appearance of grey hairs, the loss of our teeth, the wrinkles on our brows, the weakness of our knees, all these are monitors to prepare us for our final dissolution. A sudden death, which many, from a fear of suffering, wish for, certainly rescinds opportunities for improvement and repentance. Let us remember, that the sufferings of our bodies may contribute to the improvement of our souls: and who knows whether the punishment due to our sins may not sometimes be mercifully allotted us in this life, that we may escape the bitter pains of future torments, and be prepared for the presence of our Maker, immediately on emerging from this tenement of clay? Prayer, and trust in God, will infallibly alleviate the heaviest loads of human evils, by the solid comfort they afford the heart in this life, besides their powerful influence in leading us to hope for a happy immortality.

Let us therefore resolve to employ much of our

time in fervent prayer, in the vital energies of a warm piety, and place our reliance on God under all the evils that can possibly befall us in our pilgrimage. He careth for us. Let us beware therefore of being either over-anxious or over-righteous. No wisdom and no happiness is to be found in extremes; no, not in the extremes of religion or virtue.

And here let me observe, that the evils which urge the desponding sinner to despair, are often imaginary; the whims of caprice, the day-dreams of idleness, and the humours of discontent.

Amidst all our devotion, which should be constant and fervent, I must recommend a due attention to the ordinary affairs of life, and occasionally to its innocent amusements, the charms of elegance, the graces of the fine arts, and the innocent pleasures of polished society. Industry, manual industry, an attention to some art or science; some employment, useful or ornamental, has a wonderful effect in ventilating the mind, and preserving the very soul in a state of health. Dejection of spirits, or what is called by the delicate, nervousness, with all its sad effects, is more frequently occasioned by idleness and inactivity, than by the pressure of any real evil. The mind stagnates and becomes putrid, and a real evil has sometimes been salutary in causing exercise. The weeds of peevishness and ill-humour grow up in the indolent uncultivated mind, like nettles and briars in a neglected garden. The evil spirit sows tares where wheat is not allowed to vegetate. How seldom do we hear of suicide among the honest and industrious poor? The refinements of life are confined to the rich, the exalted, and the philosophical; and so are some of the greatest evils of life, false delicacy, a satiety of enjoyment, the languor of superabundance,

a difficulty to be pleased, universal dissatisfaction and weariness of existence. They who will not employ themselves in any useful undertaking, and who have wearied themselves in the pursuit of vicious pleasure, are, of all men, the most likely to say, in the words of the text, *There is no hope; but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of our hearts.* Tired with the sameness of life, satiated with pleasure, their senses dull and worn out before the time, their fortunes impaired, their characters lost, they are ready, with blasphemous audacity, to curse God and die. They know not *who will show them any good;* little thinking, from their want of religious principles, of the lively pleasures which the grace of God can excite in the heart of man, independently of all external circumstances, riches or want, youth or age, glory or obscurity.

Let us, who see their error, paint to ourselves its dreadful consequences, and avoid their example. Let us, at every return of the cheerful daylight, with unceasing diligence, while the breath is in our nostrils, employ ourselves in the service of God, and then go forth cheerfully to exert our abilities in good offices to man. Life was given for these purposes; and when employed for the purposes bestowed, it never will become intolerably irksome. It is surely in itself a most valuable gift. To be made a sentient being, capable of enjoying all the delights of this world, and promised everlasting existence in a better; is not this enough to fill us with all joy and gratitude? What were we before we were animated by a particle of the Divine Spirit? Dust; and to dust the suicide is not only contented, but desirous, to return; without a hope of re-animation. How mean and abject his ideas! The Christian hero dares

to live. The Christian hopes to bloom again, in a perennial spring, after the winter of death—to rise a glorified body in a happier state; but the suicide is eager to return to the dust from which he was taken, and would rejoice if he were certain of annihilation.

Upon reviewing the whole of the suicide's state, we may truly exclaim of him, O wretched in thy life, wretched in thy end, and wretched in thy expectations of futurity!

May the great God, before whom we stand, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, give his grace to all who hear me this day, that throughout life they may preserve cheerfulness and hope, by useful activity, and sincere piety, benevolent affections, and beneficent actions; and that when he, in his wisdom, shall bring their years to their natural close, or take them to himself by an earlier visitation, they may die the death of the righteous, and their latter end may be like his! To them, and them only, who can say with truth, that to live is Christ, to die will be gain! And when our hour approaches, O then may some gentle disease, or gradual decay, without pain, without horror, full of comfort and hope, dismiss our bodies to our safe retreat, with decent rites, beneath the turf in yonder church-yard, or to the dark chambers under the stones of those aisles, where sleep our fathers, our once-loved partners, and our dear departed children! O God, make thou all our bed in our last sickness, and grant that every one of us may, with holy Job, resolve and say, looking up to Heaven with the confidence of children to their Father—*All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come!*

SERMON VI.

ON THE FOLLY AND DANGER OF THOUGHTLESSNESS.

ISAIAH xlvii. 8.—*Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly.*

THOSE who are addressed in the text, as given to pleasures, and dwelling carelessly, constitute, it is to be feared, the majority of the human race. Among many who enjoy hereditary affluence, the pursuit of dissipating pleasures appears to be the first object of endeavour, and the principal business of existence. Seriousness is often considered, in the circles of gaiety, as synonymous with dulness. Dulness is disagreeable; and therefore he who wishes to recommend himself to the notice and applause of fashion, is induced to assume an habitual levity, and to divest himself of all taste for moral and religious meditation.

The business of self-degradation is easy. Our natural proneness to fall, facilitates our descent down the declivity. The enemy of mankind certainly co-operates in promoting our wicked purposes, and hence we find that the disciples of the world make a rapid progress in acquiring those accomplishments on which the vain and wicked have agreed to place the highest value. No character is more common than that of the professed man of pleasure, who not only avoids every thing that is serious himself, but treats the seriousness of others with derision.

There are many who fall into a similar carelessness, but whose error is to be attributed to different causes.

Without any vicious principles, or corruption of heart, they have gradually contracted habits of indolence. Thinking is, of necessity, attended with exertion. But they are habitually idle, and fond of the softest indulgences of a supine ease. The slightest exertion is to them, therefore, a real pain. Thus it happens, that they had rather vegetate, or be carried whithersoever the caprice of fortune may lead them, than to have the trouble of thought, or be compelled to adjust the measures of their own conduct.

In consequence of their disinclination and inability to choose rational employments, or manly diversions, for themselves, they passively wait to admit every trifle, and every vice, which accidentally obtrudes itself on their attention. If they preserve their innocence, which is not very probable, it is by chance. The greater chance is, that, though they began with no other fault but indolence, they will end with many dreadful sins. For life cannot proceed fortuitously, without incurring such dangers as render an escape from destruction a real miracle. It is an exact and beautiful similitude, which compares life to a voyage; and however excellent the vessel, if it is left the sport of winds and waves, it must receive injury, and will soon be dashed on rocks, or sunk on quicksands.

I purpose, in the following discourse, to dissuade men from forming a habit of Thoughtlessness. I shall first endeavour to evince, that the truest and most substantial pleasures are those which are attended with thought; in the second place, that profit, as well as pleasure, or our temporal welfare and success, are the consequences of it; and lastly, that, without it, no man can become a good member of society, or a true Christian.

I. First then, the truest and most solid pleasures are such as are attended with thought. It has been

said that *pleasure is a serious thing;* totally inconsistent with extreme levity. This will probably appear paradoxical to many; but its truth has been confirmed by the testimony of all who have best understood the science of human nature.

The man of pleasure, it is true, whenever he appears in company, is singularly gay and lively. He is ambitious of appearing happy. He affects, therefore, a never-ceasing flow of spirits. He is loud, overbearing, and boastful. The careless, or ignorant observer is led, by his appearance, to envy or admire him. But the man of pleasure is often a stranger to pleasure. He is often an unfeeling man, who has become callous by repeated excess. He is often a superficial, trifling, unideal man, on whom nothing can make a deep impression; to whom nothing can give a lively satisfaction. He is commonly a vicious man, whose enjoyments, supposing him to have any, must be alloyed by occasional compunction, by fears, doubts, and suspicions. His flow of spirits is artificial; supported by excess in wine, by the noise and riot of profligate companions. As it is ill-founded and unnatural, it is also of short duration. It is, as the scripture-language well describes it, like *the crackling of thorns.* It is a transient ebullition raised by false fire. It is like the luminous vapour, which owes its origin to putrefaction. Who have been so ready to complain of vanity and vexation in all human pleasures as the professed men of pleasure? a convincing evidence that the name of men of pleasure ill accords with their real condition.

There is indeed nothing so fatally misunderstood by the inexperienced, as the nature of pleasure. That alone is true pleasure which is consistent with reason; which will bear a review, which leaves not a sting behind it, and produces not a lasting injury

for a momentary delight. But is this the case with sensual or vicious pleasures? Ask the experience of all mankind, whose uniform decisions on the vanity and misery of a life of vicious pleasure, after they have spent it, are so strong, and so abundant, as to render it impossible to dwell on the topic without tedious repetition. I shall not trouble you with those common-place ideas which may be found in every good book of morality, but shall proceed to remind you of the substantial pleasures which belong to the sedate, the serious, the thoughtful.

The mind alone is the seat of solid pleasure. How then is he to enjoy solid pleasure who exercises his mind so little, who is so light, airy, vain, and thoughtless, as scarcely to possess a mind? He wants faculties to comprehend, with accuracy, the object of his pursuit. He has no foundation on which to erect the fair fabric which he contemplates and admires. He builds, like the fool, on the sand; and as the building is baseless, it quickly vanishes, like the fabric of a vision.

Nothing valuable is to be expected, without adequate causes operating in its production. True pleasure is certainly valuable, and is not to be obtained without thought and selection.

The voluptuary himself is ready to allow that some pleasures are deceitful. The external appearance of many common things is beautiful, and the inside deformed. The fruit with the most glossy rind and beautiful hue, frequently possesses a bitter flavour. How is any one to select who exercises not his judgment; and how can any one judge, who is not willing to think? He who will not be circumspect, will often take the counterfeit for the genuine coin, the shadow for the substance. The consequences of

his errors will be always painful, often injurious, and sometimes fatal.

He who runs on thoughtlessly in the mad career of pleasure, can scarcely fail of losing his health. Look at the emaciated figure of the professed voluptuary, even in his youth. Where are the roses which lately adorned his cheek? They withered and decayed when he lost his innocence, and contracted disease. A lurid paleness succeeds, and speaks more eloquently than a thousand tongues, the dreadful consequences of a thoughtless, and consequently vicious, course. In the prime of life he has the appearance and infirmities of old age. His hand is already palsied, and he can scarcely lift to his lips that sparkling cup in which he takes his supreme delight. But is there any truth more universally confessed, than that without health there can be no pleasure? Health is the very soul of pleasure. It is itself a constant feast, and he who joins to a healthy body a healthy mind, that is, an innocent, religious, humble, prudent mind, possesses all the wisdom, happiness, and pleasure of which human nature in this sublunary state is found to be susceptible.

The thoughtless man, in consequence of his thoughtlessness, loses another invaluable possession, an unsullied reputation. The thoughtless man acts at random, and he who acts thus, though he may do right by chance, will oftener do wrong. But one wrong action, attended with important and conspicuous bad consequences, is sufficient to sully a character. Scarcely any subsequent good conduct can wipe off an aspersion justly cast upon him on his first entrance into life. A sad instance of the injuries inflicted on himself, by the thoughtless votary of nominal pleasure! Though he is free from

malignity of intention or depravity of heart, yet, in a careless moment, he shall do a deed, the effects of which shall injure his success, and imbitter his enjoyments, during every period of his mortal existence. The world in general, and even they who are dissipated and vicious, are sufficiently cautious whom they trust in their various negociations. A thoughtless, careless, dissipated young man, though he may be loved by those who resemble him, as a companion, will not be trusted by them, nor by any one else, in those things on which the success of his worldly employment or profession entirely depends. Many will join with him in drunkenness, riot, and debauchery, admire his eccentricities, and keep up the scene of jollity till he is ruined; but none will employ him in his profession or occupation as a merchant, a physician, or a lawyer, if they can find any men of thought and prudence, to whom they may trust their health, their property, or whatever they most value.

Thus the thoughtless man is sure to suffer in his fortune. The loss of fortune, indeed, is the natural consequence of lost reputation. But he will dissipate his inheritance, if he had one, in trifles and extravagances. He will lessen it, by neglecting to inspect his affairs, and to preserve a regularity of accounts. He will neither be able to acquire, nor to preserve. Worldly wealth is seldom attained but by constant assiduity and long application. But will the thoughtless young man, who prides himself in gaiety alone, submit to the humble, the plain, the unostentatious virtues of industry, frugality, punctuality? No; they are the objects of his ridicule. He considers them as marks of a want of spirit, parts, and fire. He cannot practise the thrifty or the parsimonious virtues, because he despises them,

and because they require thought and care, which to him are insupportable. He will therefore not only not acquire, or preserve, a competency, but will be in danger of falling into extreme indigence, for idleness shall clothe a man in rags. We have all, indeed, a natural tendency to descend, and shall usually fall, when we desist from endeavouring to rise.

The man of pleasure then, who is not a man of thought and prudence, will, in the careless moments of inattention, lose health, reputation, and fortune; costly sacrifices! And for what will he exchange them? Has he his share of pleasure in return? By no means. His pleasure is a phantom, a bubble, or whatever else can emphatically describe emptiness, vanity, and delusion. True pleasure consists in tranquillity, serenity, solid and uninterrupted joy; such indeed as proceeds from a prudent conduct, from an adherence to nature rightly understood, from an obedience to the suggestions of reason and religion.

I conclude this topic, therefore, with asserting, that the man of reason and prudence, he who thinks and acts according to the dictates of mature deliberation, is the only one who can live a life of solid and substantial pleasure. Thought and care are so far from destroying, that they are absolutely necessary to the preservation and perfection of pleasure, as well as of virtue.

II. That our temporal interest must suffer by Thoughtlessness is too evident to require farther demonstration. I should, indeed, have omitted this topic, had I not reflected that many, who will not be influenced by moral and religious considerations, may be convinced and converted from the error of their ways, by being reminded that their thought-

lessness is likely to prevent them from obtaining even worldly honours and emoluments.

The advantages of the world, like all other advantages not bestowed by birth or nature, are not to be procured without diligence in the pursuit of them. The industrious will always supplant the idle; the thoughtful will always be superior, in the ultimate issue of things, to him who *is given to pleasures, and dwelleth carelessly.*

Let us look, for a moment, into the walks of real life. Who is it that, for the most part, fails in the employment of merchandise? Who is it that expends his patrimony, deceives the hopes of his friends, and dies in indigence and obscurity, after having enjoyed every opportunity of raising himself to fortune and reputation? Is it not he who, delighting in the pleasures of fashion, devoting himself to wine and wanton company, aspiring at the character of a libertine, has refused to exercise those faculties of thinking and judging, which the Almighty Parent undoubtedly bestowed upon him, that they might become the guides of his conduct?

No skill in any liberal art or science, no excellency in the exercise of any profession, can be obtained by the thoughtless man; for these require great application of mind, voluntary efforts of thought, eagerness of pursuit, anxiety, and emulation. He qualifies himself for no office and no occupation. He enjoys the protection of society, without reciprocally contributing to its happiness or support. He is, indeed, the drone of the community, and it is not wonderful that he is despised and rejected by the industrious bee.

Thus unfit for any employment, and neither seeking, nor deserving, to be trusted with any, what is to become of him under a reverse of fortune, in a

state of adversity, or in the evil day of old age? While he has youth, health, vigour, and property, he may, indeed, drag a miserable existence in the haunts of dissipation. But all these are soon gone, in the course which he pursues. He has been idly chirping, like the grasshopper, in the warm and fertile season of summer; how often will he wish, in the winter, that he had imitated the ant in the fable! This little, frugal animal may and ought to afford him a striking lesson. Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. *The sluggard will not plow, therefore shall he beg in the harvest, and have nothing. But O love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thy eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.*

III. But it is time to proceed to that part of the present subject, which is infinitely more important than any thing which has yet been advanced. I say then, in the third place, that the thoughtless man will not only not enjoy the pleasures and advantages of the world, but that he cannot possibly be a good moral man, much less a Christian.

The social and relative duties, on which the good of the community, and our mutual happiness, principally depend, can never be performed as they ought to be, by the careless votary of pleasure. To become a good magistrate, a good subject, a good neighbour, requires a close attention to a variety of circumstances and occasions. A judgment must be formed of the several connections and dependencies of life; of what is due to others in all their relations, and what we may reasonably require or expect of them. How can he determine a cause, who will not give it due consideration, or, indeed, who has not treasured up a variety of maxims and observations, by reading, experience, and reflection? How can he

assist his country in an emergency, or know with whom to take part in political sentiments, who is too volatile to exert himself, too giddy to discriminate? How can he be a valuable neighbour, who has acquired no wisdom to give advice, no steadiness which may be relied on, no valuable sentiment, and no pleasant or entertaining ideas to enrich conversation. The thoughtless man is thus led to neglect all that adorns and improves social intercourse, and without any settled, intentional malignity, he becomes a bad and an immoral man. With the best meaning, he produces the effects of guilt; with no meaning, he causes the evils of confusion.

He is useless in public life; but let us view him in private. Is he a father? His unfortunate children soon experience the wretched consequences of his thoughtless behaviour. He neglects their education. He sets them a bad example. He suffers them to run into idle, low, and bad company. He checks them not when they err. He scarcely takes so much care of them as the brute of its offspring, by the instigation of instinct. He crowns his ill usage of them by expending in folly, that fortune which ought to provide them food, raiment, and independence. He often sees them, in consequence of his neglect, following bad courses; but he is not solicitous to stop their career. He is occupied in his pleasures, in drinking, gaming, pursuing every vulgar amusement, to drown thought, and murder time. As a son, a brother, a husband, he is equally regardless of duties which each of his relations requires. Happy were it, if his thoughtlessness were culpable only, as doing no good to those of his own household; but, for the most part, it involves them in much misery. It often drags down a number of innocent persons in the ruin which destroys himself.

Few, indeed, can be foolish and wicked, without deriving bad consequences on others who deserve them not. Excluding all ideas of pecuniary loss or personal injury, they who see a father, husband, brother, or child, running the mad career of thoughtlessness and vicious folly, must always experience the pangs of a wounded, and sometimes a broken, heart.

Thus this thoughtless conduct, which the world often admires as agreeable gaiety, becomes the cause of severe wrongs to those whom we ought to benefit, and whom we are taught by nature, and bound by duty, to love. It produces effects similar to those of confirmed wickedness; to which it does indeed immediately lead, though it originated in nothing else but mere indolence or vanity. The thoughtless man, whatever the world, in the exuberance of its good nature, may allow, cannot be a good man in the sight of Heaven; for we have seen, that he usually neglects the performance of all those virtues which constitute a good man, in the moral sense of that description.

But he is equally, and indeed more deficient, in a religious sense. The character of a good Christian, as it is the noblest and most desirable that man can possess, is also, in some respects, difficult of attainment. I mean that it requires great thought, and even solicitude.

It is necessary that a man should think, in order to have a right idea of the faith which is in him. The knowledge of the Christian system, like other knowledge, is to be acquired by investigation. Grace, indeed, is liberally bestowed on him who uses his own exertions; but still exertions are necessary, both in the commencement and continuance of the Christian warfare.

There is an enemy of mankind, a wicked being,

who, though in an accursed state, still retains a considerable share of influence. He is represented in scripture, as walking about, seeking whom he may devour. The thoughtless man becomes an easy prey. The adversary seizes on him without a contest. *Be sober, be vigilant,* says the Apostle, who describes the assiduity of our adversary the devil. If we are but a moment entirely off our guard, the malicious spirit begins his assault. The existence and power of this evil being ought, of itself, to rouse the careless from his fatal slumber. He is, we are told, the PRINCE OF DEATH.*

All true Christians (whom I mention, to distinguish them from those thoughtless persons who call themselves Christians, merely because others do) are fully convinced that there is a being to whom the human race is particularly odious, and who employs himself in seducing them from the obedience due to the Most High. They therefore will readily acknowledge the absolute necessity of unwearied vigilance. But this unwearied vigilance is really difficult to be preserved; so difficult, that the most anxious among Christians have much to lament on the subject of incaution. What chance then has the man whose only study is to banish thought? He has put on no armour against the fiery darts of the wicked one. Like a fenceless city, whose walls are broken down, and whose governors have deserted it, he surrenders at discretion on the approach of the enemy. The state of the Christian is always represented as a state of warfare. It is, indeed, a warfare against a combination of foes, the world, the flesh, and the devil. How can he be a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ who slumbers on his post, when *his loins ought to be girded*

* Heb. ii. 14.

about, and his lights burning, like unto them that wait for their Lord, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately? Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching; and if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. Be ye therefore ready, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

The holy spirit of God is constantly at hand, endeavouring to inspire into our hearts his vital influence. But he requires that we should prepare our hearts for its reception. He requires that we should watch for the happy moments when we are alive to devotional feelings, and endeavour to prolong and improve them. When he finds us carelessly banishing from our thoughts every serious idea, and eagerly running the career of foolish and vicious pleasure, he is grieved and departs. He returns indeed; for mercy is patient and not easily provoked, but he returns less frequently, and after having been repeatedly rejected, he reluctantly leaves the wretched sinner to his folly and his fate.

The very nature of religion, its great rewards and dreadful punishments, the sentiments it inspires, and the morality it inculcates, all demand a serious, though not a melancholy mind. Do not the scriptures themselves represent the duties of a Christian as laborious? We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. It is a work that requires our daily thoughts, our most anxious solicitude. "But how can I bestow so much attention upon it?" says a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. "I go to church on Sundays, like my neighbours, but I can find no other time for religion. I have important business, and a thousand engage-

ments, both of interest and amusement." If thus thou thinkest to satisfy thy duty as a Christian, thou art greatly mistaken. Thou hoverest round the luminous meteors of pleasure, like the poor insect, which, dazzled by the taper's light, rashly flies near it, scorches its wings, and drops to rise no more.

Ye men of business, men of pleasure, men of wit, men of the world, if you never seriously think, you cannot be Christians. Persuade not yourselves that it will be sufficient, even if it were possible in your careless course, to consume the days of your probation in innocent trifles. Your mind, your spirit, has much to perform, to render you acceptable, and to draw down the blessing of Heaven. You have much work to do, even though you are exempted by the bounty of fortune, or rather of Providence, from manual labour. No rank, no opulence can deliver you from the necessity of spiritual labour, if ye admit the truth, and depend on the promises of the Gospel. Work then, while it is day, *for the night approaches, when no man can work.*

Meditation, as it is a duty and delight, is also a principal means of improvement in grace and wisdom to the true Christian. It is, indeed, absolutely necessary to preserve his spiritual life.

O, that the voice of the preacher could speak to the hearts of those thousands, and tens of thousands, who are busying themselves from the *rising of the sun to the going down of the same,* in every species of vanity and folly! They seem to have lost all religious sensibility, and are content to live without God in the world. Dreadful idea! Poor orphans, bereaved of their heavenly Father! Forlorn and deplorable is their condition. Whither shall they fly for succour? More wretched still, they know not

that they stand in need of it. They smile and congratulate each other on every new invented scene of amusement. *And the harp, and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands, How shall their joy be turned into mourning, when,* as the same prophet proceeds, *hell shall enlarge herself, and open her mouth without measure, and* THEIR GLORY, *and their* MULTITUDE, *and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it? Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust, because they have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.*

Listen then, ye who have erred and strayed like lost sheep, listen to the friendly voice of the shepherd of your souls. Turn ye, turn ye from the paths of vanity. Enter the sanctuary of the Lord. Open your ears and your hearts. Light and life shall reward your attention. Strange that ye should be so reluctant to exert yourselves, when the salvation of your souls depends upon your efforts. Were a trifling profit, or a fashionable amusement proposed, with what ardour would you engage in the pursuit of it? But when you are addressed on the subject of religion, and the state of your soul, you say in your hearts, *Go away this time, at a more convenient season I will speak to thee.* You cannot bear to be grave, for gravity is ungraceful.

Who that entertains in his bosom the sentiments of natural philanthropy, or rather of Christian charity, but must mourn over the lost souls of creatures capable of immortality and divine happiness? When the feeling Christian views men flourishing in fancied prosperity, rioting in nominal pleasure, and reposing

in deceitful ease, he views them with pious pity. He would not imbitter their enjoyments, but he would sweeten and substantiate them, by giving them a better foundation.

He would say to each individual, as to his friend, (and who, indeed, is not the friend of the true Christian?) Let me conjure you to remember the purposes of your creation, and to support, with your utmost efforts, the comparative dignity of your nature. Exert the noble faculties which God has given you, in a daily attention to that which is truly and substantially your temporal and eternal interest. Is it a hard thing that is required of you? You are only entreated to be kind to yourself. Remember, that now is your day. Short at best; perhaps it is already far spent. Think how much you would value, when your sun is set in this world, a few of those hours which are now carelessly squandered, as if they were incapable of improvement. For a single day, you would resign every pleasure, honour, and emolument. Let this remembrance have due weight with you now. Let it lead you, at every convenient interval, to retire from the busy crowd of common life, to commune with yourself in your chamber, to dwell with God and your own soul in the sweet exercises of pious meditation. This practice will tend to sanctify all your secular employments; to purify and exalt every pleasure and amusement; to secure a peaceful life, a happy death, and a joyful resurrection.

SERMON VII.

PERSEVERANCE IN THE RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES TAUGHT IN YOUTH, AND PARTICULARLY IN FAITH AND HOPE, RECOMMENDED.

COL. i. 23.—*Continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard.*

IT is an old observation, that fewer deviate from the path of rectitude through defect of knowledge than of resolution. Most men might say, with the poet of antiquity, We see and approve better things, while we are pursuing what we know to be worse. Though men wander in the labyrinth of life and lose their way, it is not because there are not lamps on the side of the road, and fingers pointing at every turning, but because they listen, as they pass, to some siren song in the thicket, and step aside to pluck some golden fruit, whose smiling hue raises the ardour of vehement desire.

The earliest instruction is usually religious. And though we despise the lesson of the mother or matron who presides over our infantine age, her words are often the words of the truest wisdom. She teaches us the plain doctrines of elementary Christianity, which, though it has nothing of ostentation to recommend it, is replete with the most valuable instruction. It has pleased a gracious God to render the knowledge of our duty plain and easy. It is perplexed only by the sophistry of human reason.

Even when we have relinquished this infantine period, we are seldom left destitute of religious

instruction. In all reputable places of education, it is required, that the pupils attend the public worship. In the discipline of schools there is also, for the most part, some time devoted to a business so important. The persons in England who chiefly preside over education are ecclesiastics. Their conscience, their character, their profession, require of them that they should take every opportunity of sowing the seeds of religion. And they are well convinced that no period of life is so proper for this purpose as the beginning of it, which bears so near a resemblance to the vernal season.

Parents, who themselves have been so unfortunate as to lose the religious impressions of their youth, are unwilling to train up their children in impiety. Even infidels sometimes wish their families and dependents to adopt the faith and persuasion of their country. A most honourable testimony in favour of religion! Vanity and wickedness induce men to renounce the received opinions in their writings or conversations; but a real persuasion of their importance compels them to desire that those who are dearest to them should not, in this instance, follow their examples, but be brought up in *the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

The churches are every where open; charity-schools, of various descriptions, abound; introductory books are numerous, in a small and convenient form, at a low price, given away by charitable persons, and by societies, established, and liberally supported, for their universal distribution.

It appears then, as it was my purpose to evince, that scarcely a single individual arrives at maturity in this country, without having opportunities of imbibing ideas of religion. It shall be the business of the present discourse to recommend the utmost

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attention to the preservation of those ideas when they are once received; and to urge us, after we have been trained up as children in the way that we should go, to take care when we are older that we depart not from it.

The young mind is, indeed, usually in the happiest state for the cultivation of devout, as well as other virtuous habits. The temptations of avarice and ambition have, in infancy, but little force. The heart is soft and sensible. It is prone to love excellence wherever it can find it. And the universal Father, whose attributes are all calculated to excite love, becomes, at once, an object of sincere affection, and of profound veneration.

But the scene soon changes. The pupil steps from the side of his parent or instructor, and involves himself in a course of action, or with associates who, too often, obliterate the pious ideas received in the happy period of unspotted infancy.

It is among the amiable dispositions of the juvenile age, that it is usually desirous of becoming agreeable to all with whom it has any connection. If a young man, therefore, fall into the society of vicious and profligate persons, which, considering the general depravity of human nature, is extremely probable, he will endeavour to conciliate their affections by assuming their manners. At first, he may mean only an external conformity, for the sake of complaisance; but he will soon find that what began in fiction, will end in reality.

There is naturally a fear attending the first departure from innocence. Vice, at first, appears, as it really is, formidable and odious. But familiarity softens the feature which at first disgusted. That which is no longer hated, will soon, by familiarity, become an object of love. Vice offers many tempt-

ations which, it must be confessed, are not easily resisted, when the passions are in a state of mature vigour, and when the caution which experience effectually teaches, is unavoidably deficient.

But religion will not linger, when her companion, Virtue, is dismissed with contumely. He who begins reluctantly to divest himself of moral delicacy, soon finds himself insensibly stript of every scruple, but those which interest and worldly policy require. And now the laboured instructions of the anxious parent and the diligent preceptor appear in the light of mere contrivances, to keep in awe the inexperienced boy. The rules which they gave, and the ideas which they inspired, are dismissed, as the trifling prejudices of the vulgar, fit only to awe the childish and the ignorant.

The unhappy youth now descends from the luminous heights of virtue, like a falling body, with increasing velocity. It is impossible to observe the extent of profligacy to which he may at last arrive. There is no wickedness which, in time, he may not be led to commit. But granting that a regard to his temporal welfare restrains him, in temporal affairs, from such crimes as immediately destroy his reputation, or subject him to the cognizance of the law; yet he becomes a mere worldling, a slave to the objects of sense, no less incapable of feeling the comforts of religion, than unwilling to acknowledge the sanction of its authority.

When this unhappy change has taken place, farewell all rational enjoyment. There may be riches, honours, and all that constitutes a temporal prosperity. A fabric may be raised, beautiful to the eye, but it will want a firm foundation; storms will shake it, and every blast will find its way to the poor shivering inhabitant. It is not substantial; it

is like the glittering edifices, built, for ornament, of ice, or frost-work, which, as soon as the sun shines upon them, dissolve, melt away, and leave not a vestige of their transient beauty.

It is indeed to be feared, that the temptations of the world, and the natural depravity of man, will, in general, militate effectually against the admonitions of the preacher; but if a few only, if one only is rescued from the path that leadeth to destruction, he will not have laboured in vain.

I shall endeavour, therefore, to enumerate a few of those methods which appear most conducive to the preservation of those pious principles which we have usually imbibed in our youth, from instructors at school, from books, and from the oral discourses of the pastoral minister.

The first, most obvious, and most important advice is, that we endeavour to preserve our innocence in the dangerous season of youth. When young men first step into the world, they plunge into excess with little remorse. They consider youth, and violence of passion, as sufficient excuses for irregularity. But they little think how fatal their indulgence will become to their subsequent welfare. Besides its dreadful consequences to fame, fortune, and conscience, it has a very powerful effect in destroying every kind of virtuous sensibility. Frequent excesses obliterate all that delicacy of feeling, which renders the moral sense tender, and susceptible of the slightest impulse. They superinduce a *callus* on the heart. Virtue, decency, devotion, cease to have charms capable of attracting, in the eyes of him who has habitually been given to excess in wine, and to other intemperate indulgences. Let the young man then, who wishes to retain the principles of piety, learn, at an early age, to avoid

the cup of intemperance, and the seduction of deceitful pleasure. He will thus exalt, and preserve a capacity of tasting pleasures of the purest kind. Such are those which always arise from intellectual and moral improvement, and from beneficent exertions. He will avoid a spiritual death, which, like a natural death, is by nothing so much accelerated as by intemperance.

He who lives in a constant state of gluttony, degrades himself to an inferior order of beings. He is, indeed, possessed of a human shape; but, in every other respect, he is only a more sagacious brute. He is incapable of reflection, and no more able to lift up his heart and eyes to God, than the herd of swine, whom he unfortunately resembles. Unhappy souls, which are thus prone to earth, and destitute of all ideas inspired by heavenly contemplation! How anxiously is such a state to be avoided, by all who wish to live the life of rational and religious creatures.

Many, before they have arrived at the possession of mature reason, have destroyed it in the blossom. A short continuance of an unfavourable blast will, in the spring of life, nip the most promising buds, which would else have been expanded into flowers, and ripened into fruitage.

Of all the methods of avoiding the contagion of vice in the juvenile period, none is more effectual than a resolution to avoid bad company, It has been confirmed by unerring experience, that a young man cannot mix with corrupt associates without catching their corruption. Indeed, the very choice of such society is a proof that there already subsists an inherent propensity to assimilate their manners. Where this is the case, degeneracy and ruin are scarcely to be avoided. But let all those who really

wish to preserve their innocence, be most anxiously cautious in selecting the persons with whom they intend to continue an intercourse. Let them attend to the general voice, respecting the characters of those into whose society they are likely to be introduced. The characters of most men, so far as their general conduct is concerned, are, for the most part, known to the world with sufficient accuracy.

But the love of money, or avarice, and the love of civil honours, or ambition, will militate against religious perseverance, against faith, hope, and charity, no less than the love of pleasure. The gaieties of youth, which lead to vicious gratification, do indeed sometimes terminate in the very short period while youth remains; but avarice and ambition, when once they have taken possession of the heart, will not bear a rival, nor easily admit of expulsion. These, indeed, form that love of the world, which is every where represented in the Scriptures as most unfavourable to the growth of religious improvement. To avoid these, let us take a due estimate of the little value of temporal possessions and human honours, when compared with the riches of eternity and the glories of the kingdom of heaven. It would be easy to recite a great variety of common-place remarks, selected from the heathen writers, on the insufficiency of riches or honours to secure human felicity; but because these are frequently considered as little more than the topics of a declamation, I shall only add, that if they are incompatible with a religious life, they certainly are not only of no real value, but are to be considered as the greatest curses which can fall to the lot of a human creature. *What shall a man profit, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*

It will contribute greatly to the preservation of

the Christian faith in our hearts, if we accustom ourselves to the perusal of religious books on solemn occasions, and when we commune with ourselves, and in our chamber. It is a truth, which reflects no great honour on the study of philosophy and polite letters, that many who devote a great deal of time to reading on such subjects, will not take up a treatise on religion. They would fear the imputation of superstition, or hypocrisy, if they were to be seen perusing a manual of devotion; and many reputable scholars have acknowledged an unwillingness to read the Scriptures, lest the purity of their style should be contaminated. But let all those who dedicate themselves to the improvement of the mind consider, at the same time, that the improvement of the heart is infinitely more desirable. No censure is thrown on pursuits, so innocent and delightful as those of elegant letters, and philosophy; but they ought not to engross the whole attention. The most industrious student will be able to find intervals for the perusal of religious books; and when he has once given them his attention, they will attach his mind with powerful attraction, and be the most efficacious instruments of his spiritual advancement. There is scarcely any thing which I can recommend so conducive to the retention of pious principles, as this practice of reading religious books; and though they may not be the most elegant in their style, nor the most profound and subtle in their argumentation, yet, if they breathe the spirit of true devotion, they will teach us something which will redound more to our advantage, than all the boasted beauties of ornamental literature.

Indeed, the Scriptures themselves should occupy more of our time and attention, than is usually bestowed upon them even by men of virtuous and

pious character. We are but too apt to think that, as we can at any time have recourse to them, the business of studying them may be procrastinated. But it will become us to consider, with a seriousness which the truth deserves, *how soon these things may be hid from our eyes;* and how prudent it is to use the light of the day, while it is called to-day, lest the shades of the evening should descend before we expect them, and involve us in darkness.

But if, on the one hand, we are to seek and study books written in the pure spirit of our holy religion; so, on the other, we must avoid, as a pestilence, the writings of the unbeliever. Many among the sceptical authors have possessed wit, and a plausible species of eloquence. He who takes them up with no other design than to gratify his curiosity, may be entangled in their sophistry, or allured by their artifices; so as not easily to return to that pleasant land of innocence and confidence from which he began his wild excursion.

But nothing will preserve us in a state of uncorrupted principles and virtue, without the grace of God; and habitual and fervent prayer is one of the most efficacious methods of drawing upon ourselves this heavenly benediction. Therefore we must begin early to dedicate a part of every day to prayer and serious reflection. It is certain, that the business of the world, the cares necessary in providing for a family, the avocations of a profession, do require a very considerable portion of our time and thoughts; but there is yet no situation in life so fully occupied as not to leave room for the duties of devotion. Every man retires to his pillow during some part of the natural day. When he lays his head down upon it, and when he lifts it up again, let him think of Him who has given him every good which he has hitherto

possessed, and on whom he must depend for good in future. The practice of dedicating ourselves, at the beginning of the day, to God, will sanctify every action of it; and that of recommending ourselves to his protection when we retire, will teach us to view what we have done in a religious light, and consider whether or not it is conformable to the laws of God, before whom we are prostrate in the act of supplication.

It will also behove those who sincerely wish to persevere in the good principles they have imbibed, not to neglect public worship. It has become very common among the more fashionable part of mankind, to omit this practice entirely. In this omission they certainly do a great injury to themselves, and to society. For though it be true, which admits of doubt, that they read religious treatises at home on the days devoted to public worship, yet they should reflect, that they lose what has always been thought a great advantage in raising and supporting a devout spirit, the force of example. They should also give proper attention to what they cannot but observe, the bad consequences which arise to their servants and dependents, from their neglect of public ordinances. Allowing every thing which can be required,—that a man spends his time at home in prayer and meditation, and that his understanding is so cultivated, and reading so extensive, as not to be capable of receiving improvement from the discourse of the preacher,—yet it will be his duty, especially if he is in an exalted rank, to comply with public ordinances, for the sake of those who look up to him as a model. But this topic requires a particular discourse, and I am only now recommending an attendance on the service of God at the public meeting of the congregation, for the sake of strength-

ening and preserving that faith, and those religious ideas, which the guardians of our infancy may have taught us to entertain.

But the text recommends a perseverance in Hope, as well as in Faith. *Continue in the Faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the Hope of the Gospel which ye have heard.*

Hope is the source of so much comfort, that one would suppose no persuasion were necessary to induce men to entertain it, whenever sufficient reasons appear to give it a foundation. It is indeed true, that in the things seen, Hope is, for the most part, sufficiently strong; but it is no less evidently true, that of the things not seen, we are too apt to despair. Our hope of these is at all times faint and languid, in comparison with the hope of worldly pleasure, worldly profit, and worldly honour.

But let us dare to ascend from this low orb, and penetrate the heavens. The objects which faith points out are, certainly, such as, when distinctly seen, must of necessity excite all the ardour of sanguine hope. We do not, indeed, indulge hope, when an object appears unlikely to be accomplished. Faith is necessary to produce Hope; but, when once it is produced, our happiness receives such an addition as no sublunary object can bestow. Hope gilds the prospect all around us, dispels every mist, and converts the vale of misery into a pleasant place.

Men of pleasure and of the world are very ready to discard the hopes excited by religion. Thus are they enemies to pleasure, which at the same time they profess to pursue. For the hope of immortality, and of enjoyments in a world where no moral or natural evil is to be found, as far exceeds all transient and terrestrial delights, as the sun surpasses this little orb which man inhabits. Hope diffuses a

perpetual sunshine over the mind; and causes the gentle virtues of cheerfulness, resignation, humility, and piety, to grow and flourish in it. He who entertains not the hope of a better world than this, will probably seek comfort in the trifles which this world possesses, and consequently involve himself in sin and misery. The dreadful effects of losing hope have been frequently seen in this country, where, to the disgrace of the national character, melancholy, and its bad consequences, have remarkably abounded.

But it will not be enough to entertain transient and occasional hopes, according to the fluctuation of fancy or humour. We learn from the text, that both our faith and hope are to be grounded and settled, that we are to continue in them, and not to be moved away from them. It is necessary therefore to add perseverance to our faith and hope, and it is particularly so in this age, when there is great danger that they may be shaken or destroyed by the writings of infidels and of gloomy philosophers, who arrogantly make their own reason the criterion of all that has been taught in the doctrines of Christianity.

To these let us show the neglect which they deserve. Let us turn away our ears and our eyes from their seducing and artful addresses. Let us cherish in our bosoms Faith, Hope, and Charity, and when the proud and vain philosopher shall be consigned to that despair of heavenly happiness which he voluntarily chose in this life, we shall find our hopes realized by the mercy of him in whom we believed and trusted. Faith and Hope, duly persevered in, even to the end, will make our existence in this world as full of comfort as it is capable of being; and gently conduct us to a world where there is no room for doubt, where we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but, in the actual presence

of God, find our faith justified, and our hopes converted into certain and everlasting enjoyments.

SERMON VIII.

GOOD INTENTIONS THE LEAST FALLIBLE SECURITY FOR GOOD CONDUCT.

PROVERBS, xi. 3.—*The integrity of the upright shall guide him.*

THE most valuable knowledge is the easiest to be obtained. Such is the knowledge of our duty. It is engraven on the tablets of our hearts; it is written in the plainest language of the Scriptures; it is taught by parents, preceptors, and preachers; it is explained and enforced by an infinite number of books, most of which are easily attainable, and intelligible by all who sincerely desire to procure and understand them.

Life has often been compared to a journey. But he who goes a journey, if he knows the way, or is directed by intelligent guides, seldom deviates from the right road. How happens it then that many who are perfectly acquainted with the road of life, should wander so far from it, as often to be entirely lost, always to be perplexed and embarrassed? The truth is, man obscures the light within him by his own devices, and puzzles the most obvious directions which he receives, by foolish comments, subtleties, and refinements. His pride leads him to wish to be wise above that which is written, and to render that which is abundantly plain, obscure and difficult by the perversion of ingenuity.

It is indeed certain, that many plain and illiterate men are much more constant in the performance of their duty, than the learned, the refined, and the fashionable. It has been said that since learned men have multiplied, good men have decreased. It is evident that improvement in piety and good morals has not always kept pace with improvement of understanding. True learning indeed has been supposed, with great probability, to be particularly favourable to virtue; but false learning, pretensions to learning without the reality, superficial attainments in science, and erroneous philosophy, are found by experience to be rather favourable to vice. The writers against religion have been for the most part men of great pride and audacity; but in learning little better than sciolists; and in judgment, rash and unsound. They have often perplexed both themselves and their readers, till both have fallen into a state of intellectual darkness leading to despair.

It therefore becomes the profoundest scholars and philosophers, amidst all their improvements, to retain that native simplicity, which, in the amiable state of infancy, we usually possess, and which our Saviour himself particularly loved; *of such is the kingdom of Heaven.* It has pleased a benevolent Providence to represent the outlines of our duty so clearly, that the honest peasant can discover them by sincere endeavours, no less fully and perfectly, than the profound student by diligent investigation. The student will indeed know how to discourse on the subject of his duty, to make nice distinctions where there is little difference, and to determine casuistical doubts; but I repeat, that in the great high road of sound morality and unadulterated religion, he will not have much, if any, advantage over him who possesses an honest, though uncultivated

mind, plain sense, and true simplicity. He ought therefore to be humble; and however he may speculate on indifferent subjects, to confine himself to the dictates of his heart and conscience, in all which concerns his relative, personal, and religious duty.

I shall endeavour to evince, in the following remarks, that an honest mind is the best qualification for finding and for practising all that is necessary to recommend us to the favour of God, and to secure happiness both in the present and in a future state.

The children of this world conduct all their schemes of pleasure, profit, and ambition, by the arts of cunning, and the maxims of worldly policy. They value themselves for the character of shrewd men; such as are able to devise stratagems, and to turn the simplicity of the honest and unsuspecting to their own advantage. They have so strong an inclination to duplicity, that they had rather obtain a point by artifice, though it is equally attainable by an open conduct. Their whole lives are spent in contrivance. They pause not to enjoy, even when they have obtained their object. They see some plausible scheme, by which they may be enabled to improve their success. They go on ever anxiously pursuing some distant object, and consequently for ever dreading a disappointment, and often feeling one.

Such men do indeed too often succeed; for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. But is their success the source of solid satisfaction? Is it not mixed with such restlessness, fears, and suspicions, as must greatly impair it? Grant that they both succeed and enjoy their success, yet let it be remembered that they have purchased their acquisition at a great price. They have spent many sleepless nights, they have done many hard and unjust things, they have

uttered lies, violated their promises, broken their engagements, betrayed confidence, and abused innocence. At such a price ten thousand worlds would be dearly bought.

Let them impartially compare their acquisitions with those of the plain honest man, who has earned all he possesses by regular industry, in the beaten path of an honest occupation. He has possessed his soul in peace during the course of his labours, and at the end of them can enjoy their fruits with a perfect relish of their flavour. He feared no detection; for his deeds were good, and received from the light an addition of lustre. The cunning man always looked down upon him with contempt, treated him with the insulting appellations of a grovelling mind, a stupid plodder, who had no genius for enterprise. But the event justifies his conduct. That conduct which brings a man peace at the last, and peace also during the whole of his life, is certainly founded on substantial wisdom.

The man of integrity acts, in all his relations, by the guidance of that light with which God has illuminated his conscience. Is he a father, husband, son? he endeavours to perform the duties which these relations demand, and which are rendered evidently incumbent on him, by the light of common sense, and by the feelings of his own bosom. He wants no casuistry to determine difficult points; for he has no difficult points to determine. *The path of the upright is as shining light,* it is straight and even, it can neither mislead him, nor cause him to stumble. Obliquities belong to those whose dispositions are crooked, and whose practices are consequently the same. As a son, his common sense and his affections teach him to be dutiful, obedient, and tender. He perplexes not himself with logical

inquiries concerning relatives and correlatives; he has no occasion for ethical treatises to prescribe the bounds of paternal authority or of filial obedience. He reads the volume of his heart, and leaves it to men of subtle intellects and dull feelings to puzzle themselves where all is clear and perspicuous. In all his other relations, he permits himself to be governed by the same infallible direction. What he reads written on his heart, is written as with a sun-beam; while the little comments of minute philosophy are like writings which cannot be understood without the laborious assistance of the decipherer.

The man of an honest heart conducts all his negociations with no less ease than honour. He deals plainly. His word is a bond. But true worth is soon discovered in the world, and admired and celebrated, if not imitated. Thus a good character is formed; and men are eager to be engaged with one on whom they can depend in the weightiest concerns with full security. His worldly success is now secure; and, without any artifice, he gains those important objects, which the dissembler perhaps never gains, or gains with difficulty, after a life spent in the meanest, most degrading, and most troublesome submissions and embarrassments.

There is certainly no virtue so estimable in mercantile life, as honesty; and I appeal to experience for a proof of the assertion, that none leads more infallibly to honourable opulence: but in the professions also, this quality is most estimable, and will often contribute, as it ought always, to popular favour. An honest practitioner in the Law or in Physic is justly deemed a most valuable member of society; and how little weight will the words of the preacher carry with them, when his doctrine is contradicted by his example, when it is suspected that

he is a hypocrite, and that his admonitions are merely official, the effects of his regard for interest, and not the genuine effusions of a sincere conviction?

If the upright man is advanced to high offices of honour and confidence, he finds but little difficulty in the discharge of his duty. He is determined to do justice, but to love mercy. In his mind the notions of right and wrong, good and evil, have never been confounded. He has not learned in the school of the world, to consider only what is most convenient or expedient; but in the school of Christ, and of the moral philosophers, to do the thing that is right, to love the truth in his heart, and to leave the event to Providence. Cases which perplex the subtle disputant, are to him perfectly clear. He may not perhaps have digested volumes of law, the comments of civilians, and the nice discriminations of artful pleaders; but he has read the law of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ; and he has preserved the light of nature in its original lustre, unobscured by the perversions of human pride, undarkened by sophistical ingenuity. His decisions are clear and satisfactory to others, and at the same time to himself; for they are confirmed and applauded by the internal testimony of a good conscience.

As a legislator, and indeed in every department of public life, he will preserve himself from the malignant influence of party; that fatal influence which blinds the understanding, and misguides the heart; which produces the most unjust actions and determinations; which destroys the liberty and tranquillity of whole kingdoms for the gratification of resentment, or the promotion of interest. His honest heart glows with true benevolence for his country and for mankind; and his understanding, guided in great measure by his heart, will pursue such plans, and

such only, as evidently tend to the diffusive and substantial good of all who can fall under either their immediate or their remote influence. An honest heart is a surer and better guide, even for those who preside in government, than those boasted principles, which are often called Machiavelian, but ought to be termed diabolical, policy. It can never be proved to the satisfaction of good men, that the virtues which communicate happiness in the civil, social, and commercial intercourse of men, are not the most productive of good in the political department. Indeed, the reason that men of corrupt morals and abandoned characters have frequently guided a nation, is, that such men are the most turbulent and ambitious; ready to destroy the community, by the power which their wealth affords, if they are not permitted to guide its councils; to engross its honours, and to divide its emoluments among themselves and the instruments of their aggrandizement.

Though it is certain that honesty of intention is far better calculated to promote the public good, than that kind of cunning and policy which constitutes the usual qualifications of those who rule the kingdoms of this world; yet I dwell not on this point, because few, in comparison with the mass of mankind, arrive at the rank of rulers, and therefore the topic is too confined to be interesting to a common congregation.

Indeed, so evident has been the truth that upright intentions are essentially and ultimately the most conducive to happiness and advantage, that the collective wisdom of nations has formed it into an adage. To those who are capable of taking comprehensive views of things, of seeing remote consequences in their causes, it must undoubtedly appear

that, without any exception whatever, honesty is the best policy.

Thus far I have considered the beneficial effects of right intentions, so far only as they guide us in our social conduct, and in the management of our temporal concerns. A very cursory review will evince that they are also the best guides in religion.

He who, on his entrance on a religious life, should first resolve to examine all the systems and doctrines which perverted ingenuity have produced in the world, would find himself perplexed, without a possibility of disengagement. Absurdities and contradictions would disgust him. Mistakes, falsehood, sophistry, would mislead him. Enthusiasm and fanaticism would distract him. It would indeed be fortunate for him, if he should not at last close his eyes, and seek a fancied asylum in downright infidelity.

He again who is resolved to divest himself of all prejudices, as he calls them, in favour of any particular persuasion, and to choose a sect, a church, or mode of worship according to his own particular caprice or imagination, will be far less likely to accomplish the great end of all religion, IMPROVEMENT OF HEART, than another, who, paying a deference to the opinions of his forefathers, adopts them with humility, and, instead of disputing or cavilling, employs his thoughts and efforts in DOING, to the best of his knowledge and power, THE THING THAT IS RIGHT. Religious disputes have an immediate tendency to excite and foment those very enmities which it was the principal scope of Christianity to repress. Among all the animosities which disturb mankind, those which are caused by religion appear to possess a peculiar acrimony of spirit. There is indeed too much reason to believe that pride and obstinacy are more frequently the causes of them,

than any of those pious motives which the warm disputants usually pretend. The man of an upright heart, knowing that the modes of Christian faith are of far less consequence than the Christian virtues, is little disposed to enter into controversy. He pursues that calm and quiet path which his father taught him, which he thinks the Scriptures justify, and in which his soul finds rest and comfort. While the contentious are racked with envy, jealousy, and anger, he enjoys a sweet tranquillity, resulting from the surest source of it, Christian charity. He is sensible that few of those subjects on which men disagree, are of consequence enough to disturb the repose of a good and charitable heart; and as to trifling errors and mistakes in matters of external form and ceremony, he is convinced that they had better pass unnoticed and uncorrected, than be suffered to interrupt brotherly love in the process of reformation.

I would not however assert, that an implicit acquiescence in every opinion which our ancestors have received, is required of creatures endowed with the faculties of reason. The Scriptures direct us to inquire into the foundation of the doctrines proposed to our acceptance; and indeed, without the exercise of our reason, I know not how we could understand or adopt the plainest doctrines of Christianity. But it is of much importance to have right dispositions of mind at the time of our inquiry. Such are humility, modesty, docility, and a sincere desire to improve. But the generality of professed examiners of the Christian religion enter upon the business with the most unfavourable habits, views, and prepossessions. They are influenced by pride, and wish chiefly to distinguish their own ingenuity. They are totally destitute of candour, ready to

ridicule all which appears to them irreconcilable to their own preconceived opinions, and determined to find, or to create, a rock of offence, on which they may stumble. Observe the style and manner of many who pretend to examine and to oppose Christianity, whether they display their talents in writing or conversation. They are remarkable either for an arrogance which becomes not man, or for a levity which becomes not the serious subject. They either summon the Creator and Redeemer before their own tribunal, as if they were supreme Judges of Heaven or Earth; or laugh and jest, as if life, death, and immortality, were the topics of a farce. Is it to be supposed that, with such dispositions at the time of inquiry, they should be able to investigate truth with success, or that they should be assisted by heavenly illumination? Is it not rather to be inferred, that they shall be permitted to lose themselves in the dark labyrinths which themselves have fabricated? But the modesty and humility with which the man, whose heart is right, inquires concerning the religion of his forefathers, are of a nature so pleasing to Heaven, that they tend immediately to draw down its favour and assistance. The holy spirit of God will not long be absent from the bosom in which such virtues have chosen their abode. It will descend and enlighten the paths of the upright; delivering him from the pain and uneasiness of doubt, and guiding his footsteps to all righteousness, piety, happiness and glory. Without the toil of laborious research, the pain of disputatious contest, the solicitude of a wavering mind, the upright man finds the truth, and holds it fast for ever. He fixes his principles on the rock of faith, and suffers not the open attacks of the scorner, nor the undermining

subtlety of the sophist, to shake the basis of the solid superstructure.

After all the dictates of pride and refinements of ingenuity, it is certain that the essential parts of our duty may be learned from the homely Catechism. And greatly is it to be wished, that some of those who have pushed themselves forward on the public eye as philosophers, had not forgotten, amidst the acquisitions of their mature age, the humble and unaffected instructions of their early childhood. But they scorn a kind of wisdom which is common to the vulgar. Plain truth, expressed in a simple and unadorned style, appears not gaudy enough to attract their admiration. They must be allured by the brilliancy of wit, and the ostentatious display of erudition. Truth indeed, whatever they pretend, is not really so much their object, as vain-glory. An elaborate series of metaphysical arguments, a polished style, and a parade of various reading, leads them along in willing captivity. They become rhetoricians, fine talkers, or fine writers, and in the vanity of their hearts, look down with contempt on the plain honest man, who is guided by the unprevaricating dictates of a clear conscience, of scriptural instruction, and of common sense.

Whence have the pious and honest persons who adorn the lower ranks of society, and illuminate its obscurity by the mild lustre of real virtue, whence have they derived their ideas of rectitude, but from the Scriptures? To them the very names of metaphysicians and sceptical writers are totally unknown. They never heard, and would scarcely believe, that men have been esteemed wise, because they called in question the reality of the distinction between right and wrong, vice and virtue. They would

deem such visionary speculatists, fools and madmen. To deny a God! what is it, they would say, but to be bereaved of every external sense or power of reflection. To write and converse with levity against the Christian system of religion! What is it, they would ask, but to be actuated by the immediate influence of the common adversary of Jesus Christ, and the fallen race of man. Indignation would at first predominate; but it would soon be softened by the whispers of Christian charity. Compassion is indeed justly due to those poor wanderers, who, neglecting the heavenly voice of the shepherd, have erred and strayed like lost sheep, through devious paths of their own selection.

How superior to such, how much more dignified, appears the sincere Christian of the lowest class in worldly subordination, who has learned, in the plainest language, his duty towards God, and towards his neighbour, and has practised with uniformity what he learned with humility. He appears to have taken a just estimate of his dependent state, and by abasing himself before Almighty God, how is he exalted above the minute philosophers whom fame delights to celebrate!

I should conclude, with earnestly recommending to all, the cultivation of an honest heart, and the pursuit of those maxims and rules of conduct which lead, through the paths pointed out by Scripture, to peace both temporal and eternal.

We may certainly seek every accomplishment of mind which becomes creatures blessed with the participation of reason. In science, in natural and experimental philosophy, we may extend our researches, as far as our learning and ingenuity can advance. But in moral philosophy, that grand science which assumes the office of guiding our social and personal

behaviour, let us beware of refinement. In our early youth, the precepts of our parents and instructors acquaint us with our duty, in language and methods adapted to our comprehension. The feelings of our hearts, unhurt by commerce with a wicked world, fully confirm the truth of their remarks, and the value of their admonitions. It is the spring of life. The soil is in a state admirably suited to the vegetation of every beautiful and salutary plant. Good seed is sown. Let our prayers and endeavours co-operate, in bringing down upon it the refreshing dews of heavenly grace. Thus shall it grow up to beauty and maturity, and produce every fruit in abundance, which is either sweet to the taste, or pleasant to the eye. But if our conduct is such as deprives us of this blessing, if we are proud and vain so as to induce God to resist us, instead of favouring us with his grace, the seed sown by our parents and instructors will either die entirely, or grow up in a contracted size and a distorted shape.

Among all the improvements of our education, let us then learn to value the plain precepts of piety and moral virtue. These should constitute the firm foundation of every future edifice. Appendages and decorations may be added to the building, while they do not injure the solid supports; but not even the most splendid ornaments must be allowed, which can possibly corrupt or shake the basis. Let us value and aspire at the character of scholars and philosophers, but let us value more highly, and aspire at more eagerly, the character of good and honest men. Let us resolve and say with holy Job, *Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me, so long as I live.*

He who makes such resolutions, and is enabled by

the assistance of God to keep them, is far wiser than if he had acquainted himself with every part of human science. What will it avail a man to have studied the doctrines of mere mortal men, however celebrated, if his heart is totally unacquainted with the religion of the humble Jesus? How little and futile is the philosophy of Zeno, Epicurus, and Aristotle, compared with the wisdom which is from above; with that wisdom which is able to derive a ray from heaven to cheer and direct us, wretched mortals, in our dark passage through the mazes of human life?

"*Knowledge*, says the holy writer, *puffeth up, but charity edifieth.* It is certainly a truth, however it may mortify the pride of human learning, that the most exalted improvements and the most extensive acquisitions are but contemptible trifles, compared with genuine charity in the sincere Christian. But men of learning are few, in comparison with the great mass of mankind. The majority is condemned to manual labour for the attainment of a subsistence, and a very great number is secluded, by want of inclination, ability, and convenient opportunity, from such a degree of application as is required in the pursuit of profound erudition. It is then a most joyful truth, that learning and ingenuity are not essentially necessary to our good conduct in the world, nor to our acceptance with God; that honesty of intention, regular obedience, and simplicity of manners, will open the gates of mercy upon us, when they shall be shut against the proud philosopher. Rejoice, O ye poor, to whom the gospel is preached, and for whom it seems to have been in a peculiar manner designed. Before the appearance of the gospel, the numerous tribes of slaves, and indeed the needy and obscure in general, seem to

have been but little considered in the systems of moral philosophers. It was thine, O most merciful Redeemer, to take upon thee the form of a servant, and to show that the distinction of ranks is little regarded by him who made both the rich and the poor, who professes himself to be the father of them all, and who is ready to deliver them from sin and death, whenever they display indubitable proofs of faith and repentance!

Faith and repentance, then, after all the pretensions of philosophy, are the two great objects, to the attainment of which he who is wise in the wisdom of the gospel will direct his endeavours. The inventions of men are endless. Books and systems are so numerous, that though we were to live to the age of antediluvians, we should never be able fully to comprehend them all, or to reconcile their discordance. Let us not lament. One book is sufficient for the most important purpose of life, the insurance of present tranquillity and future salvation. We may certainly amuse and improve ourselves by human learning, and the pleasing productions of cultivated genius, but our chief attention must be fixed on the tablet of duty, plainly written on our own hearts by the finger of God, and in the volume which the spirit of God dictated, and which is justly called, the Book of Life.

SERMON IX.

RELIGION THE CHIEF CONCERN OF LIFE.

ECCLESIASTES xii. 13.—*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.*

A GREAT variety of guides is scarcely less distressing than the total want of them. There was a time when books and instructors were few, and men deviated from the road, because they were destitute of direction; but both these assistances abound in the present age, and yet the mistakes of mankind are equally numerous and detrimental. The choice is distracted; and false lights are frequently exhibited so like the true, that the traveller is often conducted to dangerous ground, while he imagines himself treading in the firm and safe road that terminates in felicity.

No tongue indeed can relate the variety of opinions, on the nature of man, on his duties, on his end, which, in various periods and countries, have been advanced by the contemplative. One doctrine contradicts another; and though none of them should be found true, yet most of them are specious and plausible. The studious and thoughtful may probably select from the heterogeneous mass, a consistent system. They may congratulate themselves on their discoveries, and even claim the praise of wisdom. But the studious and thoughtful constitute, comparatively speaking, but a small portion in the great mass of mankind. Their sublime speculations,

whatever effects they may produce upon themselves, are of little utility to the world at large. The poor, who have neither the advantages of education, nor the opportunities for study, stand in the greatest need of instruction. But will the labourer, the mechanic, and the husbandman, comprehend the elegant philosophy of an Athenian school? Indeed, it may be doubted, whether the refined theories of speculative morality produce any beneficial effect on their inventors and admirers; besides that of amusing them innocently, and preventing them from contracting vicious habits, or engaging in sordid practices. They are chiefly confined in their effects to the intellect; but that which is to regulate the conduct of mankind at large, the rude as well as the polished, must, at the same time, be addressed to the head, to the heart, to the understanding, to the imagination, and to the affections.

Happily for man, who previously to Revelation was wandering in a wilderness, a forlorn pilgrim, liable to be misled at every step by false or mistaken guides, an infallible direction has been vouchsafed, by a commiserating Deity. What philosophy in vain attempted, is accomplished by revealed religion. *Fear God, and keep his commandments.* The precept is short, but full. It is the essence of folios of morality compressed and concentered; the whole duty of man in a few words; the epitome of the law and gospel. The wandering bark of the mariner, which once knew no other guide than the dubious conduct of the stars often concealed by clouds, pursues, since the invention of the compass, a certain path in the great deep, and arrives, without any dangerous deviation, at the haven where she would be. Religion is the chart and compass for the guidance of the human soul in the pursuit of happiness,

the chief good of the Christian philosopher, peace and confidence in this world, and an humble, but sanguine hope of a blessed resurrection.

The subject on which I now address you, is, of all those which fall under the notice of the human mind, undoubtedly the most momentous. What is this short life, those enjoyments which we snatch as we journey on our way, compared to the objects of Christianity? The dust in the balance, the drop in the ocean, the gossamer that floats in the air, are expressions scarcely strong enough to describe the vanity of all earthly things compared to heavenly. Then let me entreat you, as you regard yourselves, and your own souls, to listen to all salutary doctrines from this place, not with the cavilling spirit of literary or controversial critics, but with the seriousness of auditors deeply impressed with the importance of the subject offered to their consideration. How trifling is the praise of elegance compared to that of sincerity! Regard not the merit or demerit of the preacher, but regard yourselves; and suffer him, however inadequate, to be the mean instrument, under God, of contributing to your immortal happiness and your present tranquillity. Let others seek the graces of words, and please your ears by studied periods; be mine to affect and penetrate your hearts with the word of truth as it is in Jesus; that word, by which both he who ministers, and they who are ministered to, must stand or fall at the great tribunal.

If a prospect of advancement or of riches occurs to men, with what eagerness do they attend to it? The heart palpitates, the cheek is flushed, as possession or enjoyment approaches. In the morning and in the evening it returns, and occupies the first place in the thoughts. On the pillow devoted to

repose, it keeps the eye open, and the bosom throbbing with anxiety. A small disappointment occasions a paroxysm of grief. Shame on human folly! In the midst of all this perturbation, not one thought on that, the neglect of which shall imbitter the pleasures of the world, sully its glories, and render all that opulence can bestow, or luxury desire, tasteless and disgustful.

Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. From these words I mean to inculcate the necessity of making religion the guide of our conduct, and to assert the importance of grace to every mortal under the canopy of heaven, above all that solicits desire, and paints itself, like a bubble blown by children, in gaudy colours to the imagination.

The irreligious usually shield themselves with effrontery, and attack the defenders of the faith with the shafts of ridicule. Many who have been accustomed from their youth upwards to the hourly pursuit of gain, and the sordid arts of preserving and augmenting it; many who have devoted every moment to the pursuit of civil rank or sensual pleasure, will be inclined to deride the doctrine which asserts that religion is of more consequence than any thing that ever entered into the heart to conceive. But their triumph will be short. The gaiety and ebullition of lively spirits will one day subside. Disease, disappointment, and the approach of death, will present them with a scene totally different from that which now dances, in all the brilliancy of a deceitful pageant, before their fascinated fancy. They will look back with shame and confusion on the years that are passed, never to return. They will then acknowledge the truth of that warning voice, which told them in their youth, how necessary it was to

embrace with ardour the doctrines of religion; *to fear God, and to keep his commandments.* In the dejection of spirits which such circumstances must occasion, they will find themselves naturally impelled to hold up their arms, like the wailing infant to its mother, and seek comfort of Him, who can alone smooth the bed of sickness, and soften the horrors of approaching dissolution.

What then, it may probably be asked, is religion the principal business of human life? is it to occupy the chief place in our thoughts, and to employ a large share of our time? I answer in the affirmative. And do you, says the objector, recommend this to the man of fashion? I do. Will he not be laughed at? Perhaps he may. Do you inculcate ideas so serious to youth, the happy period when gay ideas crowd upon the imagination? To that dangerous age, I recommend it more particularly, because it will heighten all the innocent pleasures of youth, and enable it to avoid all which are not innocent. Religion is indeed the only rational employment which can justify a constant and indefatigable attention in all the stages of human life.

If this representation be real, my situation, says the man of business and pleasure, is truly deplorable. The calls of my profession are so urgent, that, with all good dispositions imaginable, I cannot find time for religious contemplation, or for the duties of a devotee. Besides, I look into the world, and I find some of those who are most admired in it, who succeed best in the pursuit of its advantages, and who are esteemed not only just, but wise men also, totally regardless of religious offices, utterly unacquainted with the Holy Scriptures, perfect strangers at the church, immoral in their actions, and profane in their conversation. With such examples before me, I

make myself easy, and attribute the words of the preacher to official necessity; the devotion of books, to the weakness of superstition. I have not indeed time to inspect the volumes of sacred or profane writers; but in my intercourse with the world, and its various characters, I find so many worthy and good kind of persons, who never attend to sacred things, that I am tempted to believe, one may fulfil every social duty without the least idea of religion.

Such is the apology, expressed or implied, of many individuals who support a decorous character, and imagine that they are in no respect objects of compassion. But they cannot be considered by the Christian, whose heart has been impregnated with the gracious influences of Heaven, in any other light than as deserving of charitable commiseration. They urge with supercilious severity of countenance the importunity of business. They talk of their concerns, as if they were of infinite importance; while in truth, however exalted may be their situation, their affairs are like the amusements of children, when compared to the employments of religious duty. And what is their excuse for their neglect, and what their security under the danger of it? They see other poor mortals exalted by the transient breath of popularity to great eminence of station or fame, who at the same time indicate every appearance of irreligion. But the favour of the people, and the enjoyment of prosperity are equivocal proofs of real virtue. The characters which they admire have probably consumed their whole time and attention in cultivating the arts of popularity. In their anxious endeavour to accomplish their selfish purposes, they have forgotten the God that made them; forgotten that immortal part of themselves, which, as it is not subjected to the notice of the external senses, too often passes

unregarded. Such men are by no means models for imitation. They may possess great industry, habits of business, and many estimable qualities in active life; but their want of religious ideas is a defect which the most brilliant accomplishments can never compensate. Let me then conjure the fond admirers of virtuous grandeur, and of irreligious prosperity, to undeceive and disabuse their judgment, when they associate the idea of universal excellence with that of civil eminence, high rank in the profession of law, or in offices of state, popular favour, eloquence, or opulence. There is often more true greatness, that is, greatness of mind, in a cottage than in a palace.

But let us again hear the apology of the man of business and pleasure:

I own myself, says he, destitute of religious knowledge. I want the principles on which to proceed. I was educated in those accomplishments which contribute to facilitate the transaction of business, and at a very early age I entered upon its management. Every hour was engaged in active employment. I rose early, and went to bed wearied. I have indeed heard of the gospel and of Jesus Christ, but the doctrines taught by them are either entirely unknown, or known too imperfectly to produce any effect. Besides, I must confess, that my ideas on these subjects are not such as lead to a diligent study of them; for it was no uncommon topic of conversation among my companions, to ridicule the clergy, and the gravity of religion. I am prepossessed against the whole system; and though I have never bestowed on it the serious examination of a single hour, I am persuaded, with the fullest conviction, that he may be a very good and a very happy man, who leaves such matters to the manage-

ment of those, to whom they professionally belong, and does not interfere.

To this one might venture to reply, that the representation is just, but the case pitiable. If, from the negligence or avarice of parents, you have been so unfortunate as to be engaged in the pursuit of gain, without a religious education; you ought, at your manly age, and when you can discover the defect, to endeavour to supply it. You will have the more merit in your efforts. The improvements you will make, will be all your own, under the favour of Divine Providence. Instead, therefore, of defending yourself in your present lamentable state, turn to the Lord and seek him diligently, and he shall be found. It is never too late to amend; sincere endeavours to retrieve the errors of youth, will seldom be found unsuccessful. God can always pardon, if you can truly repent.

You urge in your defence, that you have been used to hear the religion of Christianity ridiculed and reviled. But does it become a reasonable creature, in a subject of the first importance, to be determined by a jest; by the derision of those who are equally unwilling and unable to form a solid judgment? Ridicule is the weapon of the wicked; for they who are conscious of an inability to refute a doctrine by arguments, have recourse to the easier method of exposing it by laughter. Your case is indeed a common one, but not the less dangerous on that account. The majority, I am ready to believe, are enemies to religion on much the same grounds as yourself. They are prepossessed against it by the levity with which they find it treated in the conversation of the profane. Let me exhort you to exercise that reason which you claim as an honourable distinction; and dare not to reject a system of

the most momentous concern, with less examination than you would think it right to bestow on a trifling object of temporal advantage.

If you do not correct the errors of your youth, and remove the prejudices of evil example, so as to entertain a due sense of religion, I fear your state is most miserable; whatever honours or prosperity it may be your lot to enjoy, you are the object of pity rather than of envy. The hour is probably near, when you will yourself behold those things to which you are now violently attached, in such a light, as will cause them to appear worthless and contemptible.

Whoever has formed a just estimate of man, must be ready to acknowledge, that his evils are so great and numerous, of so frequent occurrence, as to require something capable of affording a source of perpetual consolation: I say of perpetual consolation, and I wish to impress the idea forcibly on your minds. Such is the instability of the most prosperous state, and so distressful the evils of ill health, the loss of friends, and the injuries of calumny, that it is necessary something should be found, capable of supporting the tottering fabric of happiness, every day and all day long, under every concussion.

But where shall we find any thing capable of supplying this perennial stream, this never-ceasing flow of the waters of comfort? Let the world and its doating admirers paint whatever charms they please, they have nothing to bestow that is able to afford any pleasure which is not in duration transitory, in fruition unsatisfactory. *Men forsake the fountains of living water; and hew them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*

For solid comfort we must have recourse to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the grace of God, the benign

influence of the Holy Ghost. No one ever sought it there in faith and fervent piety, without finding it in abundance. Under all disappointments, misfortunes, and sorrows, and of these every child of man shall have his share, he who is actuated by the energies of a sincere devotion, will find a gleam of joy brightening the darkness which surrounds him, and a spark kindling in his bosom, warming, cherishing, and enlivening every vital chord that vibrates in his frame.

Nothing in this world is fully adequate to the wishes of the good man. He looks beyond the grave, and sees in store, by the eye of faith, such pure delights as cause every thing which is produced below to appear contemptible on comparison. Hope leads him by the hand through regions, which to others are regions of sorrow, but which to him are for the most part pleasant, and at all times tolerable.

A life conducted according to religious principles, is entirely different, both with respect to the degree and nature of its enjoyments, from one totally destitute of them. We are so constituted as seldom to acquiesce in present circumstances, however fortunate. We are always promising ourselves happiness in futurity; and the temper of our minds is usually moderated by the nature of the prospect before us. What a favourable influence then must it have on the general frame of our thoughts, to be always led on by the rays of hope; a hope of a better world than this, where all defects shall be supplied, all doubts removed, all evils and inequalities in this life compensated by a share of happiness duly proportioned to our merits! Hope indeed is peculiarly the Christian's virtue and comfort. It arises from faith, and it produces comfort, such as

no opulence can purchase, and no power on earth bestow.

If indeed a man sought little else than the enjoyment of a pure, refined, and most exalted pleasure, he would do wisely to contract a habit of devotion; for there are no pleasures superior in degree or duration to those which are felt by the devout. Call them imaginary, call them enthusiastic, though you will wrong them by the appellation, still they are delightful, and not to be sacrificed to the frigid wisdom of an unfeeling philosopher. There is a fervour in the performance of religious duties when they arise from a sincere heart, which is really a most exquisite sensation. It is a sensation in the bosom, far removed from any thing enthusiastical. It is warm, but not violent; it is zealous, but not unreasonable. It is then most pleasurable, as well as estimable, when confined by the salutary restraints of moderation.

It is certain, that however scoffers may ridicule the idea, a great part of mankind derive their purest and sweetest pleasures from the regular and devout performance of religious duties in the retirement of the closet. There, all-serene, self-collected, far removed from mortal eyes, and far from exhibiting any external appearances which can justify the imputation of hypocrisy, many a devotee enjoys delights more exalted, than the professed votary of pleasure ever knew in the wildest of his extravagant indulgences.

Let us then repeat, in the words of the text, the *conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.*

Comfortable declaration! Adieu now to all the distraction of philosophy, learning, and human wis-

dom; and to the labyrinths of error and confusion. The darkness and embarrassment are no more; our duty is plainly pointed out, and confined within such limits as are easily comprehended. The whole duty, and consequently the whole happiness, of man, is comprised in the fear of God, and the observation of his commandments: plain obvious precepts, intelligible to every understanding, to all ranks, and requiring no other commentary than the virtuous sentiments of a good heart.

We may, we ought to give a subordinate attention to the business, and the innocent pleasures, of life. The duties of religion, properly understood and practised, interfere with no social, no real duty, in the actual conduct of civil, professional, or commercial employments. They sanctify all our actions, and give a dignity to the lowest occupations.

But there were some pious practices of our forefathers which, through a fear of being righteous overmuch, have been wholly neglected in these times, and in the circles of dissipated life. Such was that of pronouncing a blessing on the refreshments of a meal, or returning thanks to the Giver of all good things at the conclusion of it. This was a most becoming practice, and proceeding from the head of a family, frequently produced a happy effect on the lower branches. It might sometimes be performed with inattention, or mere formality; but yet it was not without a good consequence in general, and at particular times, in the seasons of grace, could scarcely fail of causing a sentiment of sincere devotion. It is to be hoped, that this venerable practice of our forefathers may be universally revived among the great, whose example will have force, while the admonition of the preacher is neglected.

Family prayers were much more common in the

last century than in the present. There is, perhaps, no institution, among all the customs and practices of mankind, which produces a more beneficial effect, than the reading of fervent prayer in the presence of every part of a family. It is too evident to require pointing out, that it keeps alive a spirit of devotion. It secures one part of every day to pious thoughts, or at least to silence, and decent behaviour; a very desirable circumstance; for, in many families, the dissipation is so predominant, especially on the sabbath-day, that scarcely a member of them is able to secure a moment of quiet for the purpose of pious meditation. How excellent, how honourable, how irresistibly alluring, would be the examples of family prayer, in the houses of the first nobility, great officers of state, and all whose rank is apt to captivate the minds of the multitude! Laws and political regulations would not operate on the community half so powerfully as such an example. But, in the venerable mansions of our old nobility, the chapels are shut up, and the domestic chaplains discarded, or become merely nominal dependents, appointed for interest or form sake.

Another practice which prevailed when scepticism had not gone forth among the rulers of the people, was the regular and devout reading of the Holy Scriptures; a practice, to neglect which habitually and entirely, seems to prove too plainly that the Scriptures are disbelieved. If men really thought that their best interest was concerned in understanding the Scriptures, is it to be imagined, that they would neglect to look into them, not only for a time, but, as is too frequently the case, during the space of a long life? The man who is fully persuaded that his claim to a valuable estate entirely depends on certain writings and legal instruments,

would be deemed imprudent in the extreme, if he were to refuse them an examination. There is, indeed, little danger of such refusal. He would inspect them himself with the closest attention; he would consult all those who are celebrated for their knowledge and judgment in the concerns of law. It is therefore a fair conclusion, that he who never looks into the Scriptures, disclaims their authenticity. Or if he is not quite an infidel, his omission argues that he is almost one; and no method is more efficacious in completing the character, than that of totally disregarding the Holy Scriptures, and the fine comments and discourses to which they have given occasion.

That excessive refinement which suggests an idea that the Scriptures are in a style which tends to vitiate the taste, is equally effeminate and impious. The Scriptures have been proved to contain most elegant passages, considered only in a classical view. And, of them who shall dare to say, that they are ashamed of the Gospel, on account of its style, I fear, Christ will be ashamed in the kingdom of heaven.

It was another of the pious practices of our ancestors, to bestow a certain sum annually on the poor. Many families, even among those who were far from a state of affluence, used to separate a considerable part of their income for eleemosynary purposes. It would be a misrepresentation of the age, to assert that great good is not done in affording relief to every kind of suffering; but a great part of the bounty appears to proceed from a philosophical benevolence, or a natural compassion, and not from Christian charity in its genuine acceptation. Motives, indeed, are not to be too scrupulously inquired into, while actions are found to be laudable. But no conduct can claim the praise of Christian virtue,

which originates not from principles purely Christian. A savage can feel no less strongly a casual emotion, than the polished European. It is therefore proper to recommend the annual distribution of a fixed sum in alms, for the love of Christ, as it is called, that is, on Christian principles, and not to wait for the accidental incitements of a miserable object, or the fanciful sensations of a refined, but capricious benevolence.

The Christian religion, ever friendly to the friendless, is remarkable for recommending almsgiving. A great part of a Christian's duty consists in almsgiving. And, indeed, it not only conduces to the relief of the indigent, but is, at the same time, an evidence of sincerity. Most men are immoderately attached to self-interest and lucre. If they can be induced to give up a portion of their money, which they love with so irrational a predilection, on conscientious principles, it is a proof that they are not nominal Christians only, but are willing to consider that which is held in higher esteem than all other sublunary things, in a subordinate rank to the performance of the duties which Christianity prescribes. It is certain that there is no method of spending a part of our fortune, which can be so conducive to our real advantage.

And let me hope, that at the present* season of Christian festivity, those, who possessing this world's goods, sit round their cheerful fires, and enjoy the very allowable pleasures of a plentiful table, will drop a few crumbs for the Lazaruses at their door; will send a portion of their good things to the cheerless habitation, where the faint ember seems but to mock the misery of the poor labourer, the sick wife, the aged matron, and the shivering children. Too

* January.

modest to beg, and unable to labour from the inclemency of the season, or the infirmity of age and disease, open your hearts to them: open your coffers also, though the lock is nearly rusted with disuse, and the hinges are fixed through want of motion.

I know the poor, narrow excuse for neglecting almsgiving. There is a parish provision, and there is a house for the poor. But will this satisfy the true Christian? He pays, it is true, a considerable rate. The law compels him. But is his heart concerned in the payment? Charity must be voluntary. Give something more than you are compelled to give, for your own sake; to do yourself good. Select your objects: select the sick, the aged, the lying-in woman, when female weakness endures pains at which stoics would lose their apathy, and which every one who has a right to be called a Man, must be eager to relieve; and let not an over-nice virtue be too scrupulous about the morals of the object; too often a paltry excuse of avarice. Talk not too much of immaculate objects. All that are wretched are deserving of relief from wretched fellow-creatures. Forget their failings in their misery, and be not extreme to mark what they have done amiss, lest God, when he is about to distribute mercies to thee, should examine first into thy deservings. The more wicked, the more miserable, and the more the object of a Christian's compassion.

Let him who sincerely desires to revive, or to maintain a lively sense of religion, omit no opportunity of partaking of the blessed sacrament. He will experimentally find that it is a source of comfort; that it strengthens and refreshes the soul, in a manner not to be accurately described, though powerfully felt by the sincere believer. I will caution the pious Christian against too anxious a curiosity in

examining this, or any other holy institution, which contains in it something of mystery. The safest method is to acquiesce in all received practices and opinions which do not evidently contradict both reason and Scripture. Faith implies a submission of the pride of human judgment. He who will not communicate till he has examined every particular respecting the sacrament with the eye of philosophy, will, it is probable, be too much elevated with the pride of reason, to be able to receive the sacrament with that awe, that sincerity and devotion, which are necessary to produce its best and most durable effect, Growth in Grace.

But the performance of these ordinances will not be sufficient to promote a due degree of Christian perfection. Private meditation, and sincere piety in the closet, are absolutely necessary to raise and preserve the ardour of religion. Without some degree of ardour, I fear, religion will be ineffectual to secure salvation. The coolness which many controversialists have displayed in the essential concerns of religious duty, while they have treated each other with unchristian virulence, is a circumstance which raises in the mind a suspicion of insincerity. When religion is considered merely as a science, it seems to extend its influence no further than the schools, and to possess no power over life and conversation.

Dismiss that frigid, languid, and cold reserve, which would disgrace an honest heart in the common transactions of human life. Let our bosoms glow with devotion. The love of God, the love of our fellow-creatures, the love of our duty in general, and the love of every thing excellent, must partake that warmth which is characteristic of all sincere affection, or how can it be denominated Love!

Let us then devoutly pray to the God of mercy to open, to warm, to melt our hearts by the influence of his Holy Spirit. May he vouchsafe that refreshing influence on all who are assembled within these walls, on him who preaches, and on them who hear! May he not only inspire us with a taste for devotional pleasure, but strengthen, as well as warm, our minds, and give us resolution to practise the duties, while we love and adore the excellence of religion! May we never forget, that the natural consequence of a sincere fear and love of God, is to keep his commandments! Without an earnest endeavour to give this proof of our religion, I fear we shall, with too much justice, incur the imputation of hypocrisy, or irrational enthusiasm.

And here let me be pardoned, if I trespass on your time in adverting to the season of the year. It suggests reflections which tend, in a peculiar manner, to enforce religious instruction. The reflections on the commencement of the new year are, indeed, such as arise spontaneously in the mind of every man of thought and sensibility. The silent, yet rapid, lapse of time, the shortness of life, are common topics; but though information may be superfluous, admonition may be useful. The most important truths, because they are obvious, pass unnoticed; like the great source of light and heat, which rises and shines on many who never admire the glorious luminary.

One year more we have just closed. It is gone irrevocably, as the years before the deluge. How many important and unexpected events have happened *in it*! Let us pause a moment in the retrospect. How many of our friends and relatives have finished their course in it, and now sleep with their fathers! And whether all of us, who are now assembled here in

health, shall live to meet again at the commencement of another year, is known only to him, to whom the past, present, and future are expanded in one unbounded scene. The probability is, that some of us shall fall asleep ; that many changes in health, many vicissitudes of fortune, may take place ; that our sorrow may be turned into joy, and our joy into sorrow. Such are the probabilities.

It is certain that this world is passing away from us rapidly. You see this in the book of Nature; how soon shall the rose-bud be full blown, and then wither and fall to the ground. Year after year glides away, too often without reflection. Of nothing do we take so little notice, as of the few years we have to live. We see a long perspective—an extensive view—drawn by the flattering pencil of Hope; but we see not the pit-falls that lie under our feet; and while we are looking at a distance, we sink, and are seen no more.

In this state of instability, walking on the brink of a precipice, how shall we fix our troubled minds; where find rest to our weary feet; on what shall we anchor the frail bark? On the firm ground of religion. Let every year advance us more nearly to Heaven, as it brings us nearer to our dissolution. *Fear God, and keep his commandments.* Plain, unrefined, but solid and substantial, advice! Keep it with anxious solicitude, and beware of that philosophy and indifference which are prevailing in the land, diffusing misery of all kinds, and terminating in madness and suicide. *Fear God, and keep his commandments;* for as this is the *whole duty,* so it is the WHOLE HAPPINESS OF MAN.

SERMON X.

ON CONFORMITY TO FASHION AND THE CUSTOMS OF THE WORLD.

ROMANS, xii. 2.—*Be not conformed to this World.*

"IT is impossible to admit this doctrine," exclaims the man of the world. "Am I forbidden to conform to the world? Absurd and reprehensible precept! It is the business of a polite education, and the study of every man of sense, to acquire such habits as qualify him to conform to the world with gracefulness and address. I look around," continues he, "and see the ablest and most celebrated among mankind labouring to please the world, by complying with all its extravagancies. On the other hand, I see those who are singular in their opinions and conduct, however virtuous and innocent they may be, the objects of censure and of ridicule. I conclude therefore, that the Christian religion does not command a non-conformity to the world; or if it does, that this is one among the internal evidences of its want of foundation."

Such probably are the ideas of a worldly-minded man, on hearing the text repeated. But however he may deceive himself with false reasoning, it is evident to every candid mind, that the text forbids conformity to the world in plain and express terms, and without the possibility of evasion. *Be not conformed to this world.* Language cannot more directly utter any prohibition.

I affirm that the Christian religion certainly does forbid us to conform to this world, however strange it may appear to the man of the world; and, instead of an evidence of want of truth, that this prohibition conveys an idea of its heavenly extraction. No religion but that which originated from Heaven, could teach so sublime and magnanimous a morality.

It is to be lamented that some cautious moralists appear to be under the influence of a fear to offend, which induces them to explain away any doctrine which is unpalatable. They exercise great ingenuity in devising limitations and exceptions to rules which oppose the general inclination. But it becomes every faithful servant of Jesus Christ, to teach such doctrines as he finds in the Gospel, and as his own conscience assures him to be true, though they should appear paradoxical to proud philosophy, and impracticable to the infirmity of human nature. The ministers of the Gospel, may indeed please men for their good, when they do not violate the truth or neglect their duty; but St. Paul says, *If I yet pleased men,* (by improper compliances,) *I should not be the servant of Christ.*

However then it may displease men, it is the preacher's duty to enforce the prohibition of the text in its plain and unsophisticated meaning; which is, that the true Christian must not be conformed to this world.

But it is proper to make a few observations on the Scriptural sense of the word "*world.*" It means a predominating system of conduct and sentiment opposed to good morals and true religion. It comprehends that part of mankind only who are influenced entirely or chiefly by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; and who, by dint of audacity and falsehood, make proselytes,

and lead the fashion. Such persons, even in common language, call themselves *the world.* All who tread not in their footsteps they consider and represent as no less insignificant than obscure. Versatility of morals and manners, and a compliance with the vices and vanities in vogue, constitute, in their opinion, the summit of all human excellence. To have a great deal of the world,* to be persons of fashion and of the world, is considered as a much more desirable character, than to be an Israelite indeed, an honest man, or a pious Christian.

The world then in the Scriptures, when it is censured in the aggregate, means the wicked part of the world, which appears unhappily to constitute so large a part, that, by a very natural figure of speech, it is put for the whole.

It is evident then, without any refinement, casuistry, or sophistry, that nothing can be more reasonable than a prohibition to conform to a wicked world. To correct the vices of a wicked world, is the business of all morality and all religion; and if any arguments should prevail on great numbers not to conform to it, a reformation must be produced in the whole, and the wicked at last become a minority. Numbers keep them in countenance, and every one who conforms, adds confidence to the party.

But not to dwell too long on general topics, I proceed to offer to your consideration several practices, to which many who call themselves Christians conform, but which they must anxiously avoid, if they have any serious expectation to receive the reward of a Christian.

Lust, avarice, and pride, seem to be the principles which influence the conduct of worldly-minded men.

* *Avoir du Monde.*

By the abuse of language, and by the arts of the seducer and adversary of human nature, these three principles acquire names far less odious than those which I have given them, and which are indeed their right appellations. Thus lust is denominated gallantry, or sentimental tenderness; and the love of pleasure, youthful gaiety. Avarice is called the spirit of enterprise, industry, economy, frugality, and a talent for the conduct of business. Pride passes under a thousand names and shapes; it is ambition, it is taste, it is spirit, it is activity, it is a just sense of one's own rank and dignity, it is every virtue and excellence; for it can assume the shape of those which are most contrary to its nature, even charity and humility. Let it be remembered, that under pride I comprise vanity, which, though sometimes distinguished from pride, is certainly a species of it.

With respect to lust, the passions of youth are strong; and it is to be hoped that much will be forgiven us in consideration of our infirmity. But much of the corruption which is in the world through lust, arises not from strength of passion, or infirmity of reason. It arises from mere wantonness and presumptuous wickedness. Violations of chastity are so far from causing shame in the man of the world, that they are often the occasion of his boasting, and the subject of his merriment. Many have brought themselves to commit acts of impurity without the smallest degree of remorse, not as submissions to sin after painful reluctance, but as acts which distinguish them for spirit, and give them the enviable title of men of pleasure.

Unlawful pleasures are strictly forbidden in the Scriptures, but they are pursued, in preference to all others, by the man of the world, because they are

unlawful. It is a remark confirmed by experience, that human nature, when left to its own conduct, tends to whatever is prohibited, apparently for no other reason than because it delights in frustrating restraints and despising authority.

Look into the gay world, and observe with what levity sins, to which eternal punishment is threatened, are mentioned in conversation. The most intemperate and indecent indulgences are palliated, if not praised, as youthful sallies and harmless frolics.

But does the impudence and wickedness of men alter the nature of things? and are violations of chastity less criminal in the eye of Heaven, because men have consented to connive at them? No; they are still most heinous sins, according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in whatever light they may be considered by the man of the world, and the man of fashion.

Can then the Christian conform to the world, in this instance, without giving up all just pretensions to Christianity? He must add hypocrisy to lust, if he can join the debauchee in wantonly indulging or palliating the irregular and excessive lusts of the flesh.

He will, indeed, like all human creatures who possess human passions in their natural strength, feel tendencies to sensual indulgences; but he will differ in this from the profligate worldling, that he will indulge himself only in lawful and regular methods. If he has not the command of concupiscence, he will enter into the state of matrimony, and live in innocence and mutual love. *Marriage is honourable in all,* saith the Apostle, *and the bed undefiled.*

And here I cannot help animadverting on the unlawfulness of living in a state of vicious celibacy,

and the wickedness of justifying, as is now too common, a life of concubinage. The world justifies what it too often practises; but religion, good order, and good morals, reprobate every other union of the sexes, but that of marriage. To be conformed to the world, so far as to despise or violate that sacred engagement, is to give up all pretensions to the purity which God will require.

Sins of real infirmity, I have observed, will probably meet with mercy; but the lustful practices of the world are sins of presumption. The men of the world glory in their shame. But let every man who values the favour of God, beware how he is seduced, by the worldling's boast or ridicule, to a conformity to the ways of vice, which, though it may gain the applause of a few vitiated companions, leads to the greatest miseries which human nature can know in this world, and to eternal condemnation. He who wishes to purchase the applause of wicked sensualists by conforming to their manners, must pay a great price for it, even his own soul; for fornicators and adulterers are expressly excluded from heaven. *But fornication, and all uncleanness, let it not be once named amongst you, as becometh Saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks; for this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God. Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

And can it be thought an improper prohibition, which forbids a conformity to the world in sins, which, though the world seems to consider them of no great consequence, are strictly forbidden by the Gospel, and threatened with eternal condemnation? The world laughs at what it calls gallantry;

but he who is to judge the world, denounces vengeance against it, as constituting crimes which are incompatible with holiness, and disgraceful to human nature.

The next principle which regulates the conduct of the worldly man is avarice; and to conform to the world in the practices to which this principle gives rise, is equally repugnant to reason and religion.

The acquisition of money appears to be the sole purpose of many, during the whole course of a long life. And the world is so far from censuring them, that it usually approves and admires them, as men of sense, who know the value of things, and employ their time to advantage. They engage in the transactions of buying and selling with such eagerness, and keep their accounts with such anxious accuracy, that they have no time for religious acts and serious meditation; but they value themselves, and are esteemed by others, for their indefatigable attention to what is called the main chance.

There are others who scruple not to engage in dishonourable employments, and if they escape the animadversion of the law, and are successful in the accumulation of fortune, they are courted and valued in the world. Such charms hath wealth, that however it is acquired, provided it is not with notorious infamy, the possessors are well received, and even honoured in worldly society.

The professed men of business and of the world, seem to have adopted the precept which the poet of antiquity ironically gave. *Get money,* says he, *first, and virtue after money. Get money, if you can, honestly; but if not, get money.* They acknowledge no other object of pursuit to be equally important. And the world, instead of censuring their

unreasonableness, applauds their choice, especially if they are successful.

The gamester is usually under the influence of avarice; but the gamester is a character in which scarcely any pure and solid virtue is found to exist. Religion, he considers, if he considers it at all, which is not very likely, as the invention of subtle politicians, and the belief of fools. His morality, if he has any, is mere convenience and utility. But the gamester is by no means in so great a degree of disesteem as such a character deserves. If he has wit, vivacity, and money, he will be much countenanced in the world, and able to overbear the modest and conscientious Christian.

The covetous man of the world never thinks of doing acts of charity by alms-giving. He may, indeed, hypocritically contribute to a collection, if he thinks it will give him credit in the world, and that a mite so deposited will pay good interest; but he gives nothing from religious principle.

He is indeed entirely governed by a most unreasonable self-love. Wherever he can take advantage of others with secresy and safety, he will not be restrained by delicacy of honour, or of principle. He will over-reach in a bargain, availing himself of the ignorance of those with whom he negociates; oppressing his dependents, his servants, his tenants, his relations, and the poor in general; and notwithstanding all this, if he can but abstain from acts, on which the law would animadvert, he shall be considered and esteemed as a shrewd and sensible man.

But can a good man conform to the world in such instances as these? Can a Christian, taught by Jesus Christ, who came in a low estate, to show of how small estimation are riches in the sight of God; can a Christian devote himself to Mammon, and forget

the law of love and charity? Woe to him, if he conform to the prevailing manners, which would teach him to live for himself alone, destitute of every benevolent sentiment, trusting in wrong and robbery, depending upon riches as the chief good, and neglecting all the offices of religion, both public and private, in order to become one of those rich men who shall enter Heaven when the camel can go through the eye of a needle.

The Christian knows that godliness is great riches, and resolves that, as he cannot serve God and Mammon, he will serve God only with his whole heart, attending to lucre merely as it is necessary for the moderate comforts and conveniencies of life, for providing for his household, and doing good to the poor. He will so little regard the sentiments of the world, that he will sooner fall into extreme poverty, than endeavour to avoid it by injustice.

But the desire of accumulating superfluous wealth, often arises from pride as well as avarice; and pride is the next ruling principle of the worldling which I proposed to consider.

Pride is not placed last, because it is of least consequence. On the contrary, there is, I think, cause to call it by the name which it has often received, the universal passion. Its universality does not in the least extenuate its malignity, and there is every good reason why the Christian should obey the text, in refusing a conformity to this world in that conduct which originates from pride.

It is evident, on the slightest examination of human nature, that pride was not made for man. He is a poor, weak, and dependent creature; and when he trusts in his own strength, and presumes on his own excellence, he becomes an object of contempt, as well as compassion. But I will not dwell on gene-

ral invectives against pride, as the topic is quite exhausted. I will rather look into the living world, and remark a few instances of fashionable errors arising from pride, to which the Christian cannot, consistently with obedience to the Law of God, and his own unperverted reason, conform. Under pride, as I said before, for the sake of brevity, I comprehend vanity.

A contempt of others is visible in many who are elevated by fortune a few degrees higher than the middle ranks, and who claim to themselves the distinction of people of fashion. They scarcely condescend to acknowledge the rest of mankind as partakers of the same nature. They are willing to consider them as born to be instruments of their inclinations, and slaves to their pride. They speak of them as of persons whom nobody knows, as dregs and scum, with whom it is impossible to have any intercourse without pollution.

But can the Christian, who is what he professes, conform to this arrogant behaviour? Is he not taught in the volume, in which he seeks the rule of his conduct, to treat all men as his brethren, created by the same Almighty God, and redeemed by the same all-merciful Saviour? Shall he admire and caress a vain haughty crowd, however vicious and impious, only because they have rank or riches, and agree to denominate themselves the leaders of fashion, the lawgivers of decorum? And shall he despise and hate the humble and meek, only because they cannot live with splendour, and are unwilling to adopt fashionable vices? No; it is his duty and inclination to love all mankind, and to promote the general improvement and felicity of human nature. How liberal and enlarged is such a sentiment, compared with those of the mere man and woman of fashion!

persons of narrow minds, intent on little else but self-admiration, who herd together indeed, and keep each other in countenance; otherwise, from their frivolity, the laughing-stock of mankind. Their audacity is indeed for the most part equal to their ignorance of all solid philosophy and goodness; and, by dint of it, they often have some authority in this world; for this world is their element, and they dare not soar to the sublime regions of heavenly contemplation. Their souls are prone to earth, and destitute of every thing celestial. But the Christian, on the contrary, while he walks on this low orb, dwells with the Most High. He does his duty on earth; but he seeks his honours, distinctions, and best enjoyments in Heaven. To conform to this world, would be to forfeit a better.

Luxury of the table, luxury in dress, luxury in every thing contributing either to pleasure or ostentation, originates from pride. Men wish to draw the eyes of the world upon their persons, their houses, their equipages and retinue. Whatever be the expense of supporting a splendid appearance, it must be incurred. For this, debts are contracted and never paid; or paid reluctantly, and with unjust deduction. For this, the alms due to the poor are withheld, and every expense conducive to the public good, and indeed to the real welfare of the owners, is refused.

But the true Christian cannot conform to such folly and injustice. His ambition leads him not to place his happiness in pomp and vanity, in pleasing the eyes of men, but in doing that which is right in the sight of God. He knows, that, instead of luxury, he is to practise self-denial, abstinence, alms-giving, humility. He is not to be a lover of pleasure, more than a lover of God.

The man of the world is always in pursuit of fashionable amusement. Public places of gay resort are the temples in which he offers his sacrifice, and pays his adoration. All his time is consumed in the hurry and confusion of dissipating delights. But the Christian is obliged to spend many of his hours in prayer and meditation, in which indeed he finds more satisfaction, than a giddy round of unceasing diversions can afford to the voluptuary.

The man of the world glories in the character of a vicious man of pleasure, provided you allow that his vices are such as become a man of spirit and fashion. Such the world denominates adultery, fornication, gaming, and excess in wine. But the Christian is taught to abstain not only from all evil, but also from all appearance of evil.

The man of the world gives way to the most unbounded ambition. If he can raise himself to high rank and fashion by any means, by assisting and maintaining falsehood with audacity, by oppressing modest merit, and overbearing all opposition, the world will admire him as a great man, and he will plume himself on his own wonderful abilities. But the Christian is taught to fix his thoughts on higher things than the honours of this world; and though he refuse not worldly honours, when they can be acquired by virtue, yet he scorns to supplant another, or to rise one step by violating Christian charity.

The man of the world is very intent on the important business of decorating his person, and more anxious to accommodate his dress with nice exactness, to the laws of fashion, than to observe any rule either of religion or morality. What delight he takes in contemplating his poor frail body, after he has adorned his hair, and clothed himself in the colour and shape dictated by the mode! As he

admires himself, so is he admired by the world, a model of grace and decorum. But the Christian is more studious to adorn the inner man, with religious sentiment, social virtues, and useful knowledge, than to deck a body which is tending every day to corruption, and which, compared to the soul, is but a casket to the jewel. He takes care indeed to be clean and decent, and to give no offence by external singularity; but he does not doat on his limbs and features, nor the cloth that covers him, like the empty, effeminate, self-admiring man of fashion.

The man of the world values himself on what he calls his *honour*. And what is this honour? It is not piety, it is not chastity, it is not temperance; for the professed men of honour pride themselves in breaking down all the restraints which these virtues would establish. His honour is therefore a composition of self-love, pride, and anger. How does it display its effects? in a readiness to shed the blood of the first man that shall dare to give an affront. Duelling is a practice forbidden by the laws of God and man; it originates indeed from the most diabolical pride, and is no less repugnant to true humanity, than to Christianity. But still it is in good repute in this world. The duellist is never ashamed of himself. No, he thinks that to have killed his opponent, or to have endeavoured to kill him, is an honour. To use a familiar expression, it is a feather in his cap as long as he lives, and gains him ready admission and admiration in the gayer circles. A very striking and convincing instance of the propriety of that prohibition of the text, which forbids the Christian to conform to this world!

How much nobler the Christian's conduct! how much more courageous and magnanimous! He forgives his enemy, he prays for those that have cruelly

and despitefully used him. Like a true hero, he dares to act up to his principles, and, in open defiance of the contempt and derision of this world, to obey God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. How poor spirited, timid, and cowardly, is the duellist in comparison! He is afraid of the laughter and neglect of a few poor, wicked, hot-headed, mortals like himself, and therefore draws his sword to plunge it into the heart of his fellow-creature, for some trifling offence, without having sought an explanation, or giving room for reconcilement.

Much is to be forgiven to human passion and infirmity, and pitiable is the case of those half Christians, who, through the fear of shame, are driven to appear in arms against their brother, in opposition to their own conviction. The legislature should interfere for the protection of such men; and the professed, habitual, blood-thirsty duellist, who fights without passion, should die by the halter, like every other wilful murderer.

Let it never be esteemed a disgrace, that a believer in Jesus Christ refuses a challenge; for, if he accepts one, he would be worthy of pity, contempt, and every punishment which is justly due to him who deserts his principles in the day of danger. Let the world revile and ill use him as it pleases, he trusts in one who has overcome the world; and did not the world mock and crucify the Lord Jesus Christ, the captain of his salvation, and the judge both of him and of his persecutor, at the great tribunal?

But the time will not permit me to enumerate all the instances of fashionable sin and folly, to which the Christian cannot conform.

The Christian will indeed conform to the innocent customs of the world, whenever he can do it without neglecting or violating the law of the Gospel. When

there is no reason against conformity, there is always one for it. Those Christians are to be censured as deficient in judgment, who have given unnecessary offence, and rendered their religion disagreeable and forbidding, by excessive moroseness, and useless rigour.

But the greater danger is, lest men should conform too much than too little, to the manners of the multitude. I must exhort them to obey the text, to assume a moral heroism, and to dare to be singular in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Many who are unwilling to be thought deficient in resolution and spirit, have not courage to stand against ridicule. They suffer themselves to be laughed out of their religion, and into a compliance with every sin, which fashion, in the vicissitudes of her caprice, shall condescend to authorize. A strange infatuation, to surrender their reason, not to argument, but to a sneer; to be afraid to be called saints, but not sinners; to run the hazard of losing all the advantages promised by religion, not for the sake of gaining the whole world, which would be indeed a sad exchange, but for the sake of avoiding the derision of that part of the world, whose applause and good opinion would be in reality the greatest misfortune and disgrace!

Those surely who stand so much in awe of man, as to be afraid to obey the words of the text, do not sufficiently stand in awe of God. But, if we really believe, let us think seriously of our situation; that we are placed in a wicked world, a friendship with which, is declared in the Scriptures to be enmity to God. Let us resolve to make the word of God, and not the fashion of this world, the guide of our sentiments, and the model of our conduct. This world endureth but for a moment, and shall we sacrifice,

for so short a triumph as that which the momentary applause of men can bestow, the elevation and improvement of our natures, which religion teaches us to obtain? A purchase so dear would argue our folly, as well as our impiety.

And with respect to the character of true gentility and true nobility, since men are so anxious to be esteemed for these qualities, be assured that there is none so truly noble as the real Christian. Compare the real Christian, with that vain, varnished, imitating character which the world admires, and dignifies with the name of the man of the world, the fine gentleman, and the man of fashion. The true Christian is, in every respect, the true gentleman; for he is really gentle and humane, resigned to God, and beneficent to man. But he who conforms to this world in its fashionable sins, is made up of deceit and dissimulation. He has the semblance of virtues, without the substance. He is a whited sepulchre with rottenness within. He is neither pious to God, nor friendly to man, however high his pretensions to wisdom and benevolence. Himself is his idol, and to this he sacrifices in every action of his life. *In the last days, men shall be lovers of their own selves; lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God; and shall seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. These are the servants of corruption; for, when a man is overcome of the same, he is brought into bondage.* Short-sighted and narrow in his sentiments, he who thinks of nothing but this world, and excludes himself from a better: though his fellow-creatures, short-sighted as himself, admire him, he is, in the sight of God, an object of pity and indignation. And how will the world, to which he devoted himself, reward him? in his life, with unsatisfactory enjoyment, and at his death, with

infamy or oblivion. But the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance; for it must be acknowledged, that the world, ill judging as it is while men are alive, usually bestows fame and infamy on the defunct with little partiality.

But indeed, what is the favour or odium of the best part of the world, compared to the pleasure and displeasure of God? *Let us first seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof,* and then we shall view this world, and all its vanities, in their proper shape and colour.

I take leave of the subject, wishing to impress on your minds a passage from the word of God, which, duly considered by you, must have more weight than the most eloquent human discourse.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him: for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. To be carnally minded, is death; but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace, Be not therefore conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.

SERMON XI.

ON SEEKING A REMEDY FOR SORROW, IN VICE AND DISSIPATION.

ECCLESIASTES, vii. 14.—*In the day of adversity consider.*

It was the wisdom of the ancients to seek comfort under the pressure of affliction, by applying to reason, philosophy, and religion. Prayer and

patience were deemed the best balsam for the wounds of the heart. The resigned sufferer bowed under the rod that smote him, and in the solitude of his retirements, endeavoured, with penitential tears, to avert the anger of an offended God.

But, in the present times, the best method of removing sorrow, is supposed to consist in flying from it into the haunts of riot and dissipation. Keep up your spirits, is the advice of surrounding friends; and the advice would be good, if it were not followed by prescribing a mode of practising it which is always injurious, and often ineffectual. Avoid solitude, says the adviser; have recourse to public amusement, gay company, the song, the dance, the juice of the grape; in a word, *eat, drink, and be merry.*

If this mode were found experimentally successful, much might be said in its favour; but it is observed, that of those who fall into the last sad stage of despair, the greater number consists of those who sought refuge from temporary sorrow, in the whirlpools of vicious and extravagant pleasure. The truth is, that this remedy, like strong drink to a nervous body, enlivens for a while by an unnatural exhilaration, warms by a false fire, which burns without fuel, and, by consuming the *stamina*, increases the debility it was intended to remove. I will not deny, that in some instances it causes a stupor of the faculties, which destroys the sense of woe by destroying the feeling: but this effect of it proves it to be a remedy which degrades human nature to the rank of a stock or a stone, and below a brute; a remedy worse than the disease, and such as no man who sincerely values his endowments of reason, and cherishes the hopes of religion, can wish to adopt.

But there is just cause to believe, that adversity is intended by a merciful God for the good of the sufferer. To fly from it to vicious dissipation, is to frustrate this purpose, to despise the wisdom, and to defy the power, of the Almighty.

To love adversity, is a contradiction to human nature. To seek it, would be madness and folly; but to improve it to an advantage when it comes, as come it will, notwithstanding all our efforts to prevent it, this is at once a dutiful and wise conduct. To turn evil into good, is a most valuable kind of moral alchemy. Thus the physician converts hemlock into a most powerful medicine; thus the heaven-taught insect sucks honey from wormwood, from the briar, and from the deadly nightshade.

Adversity indeed, without our own efforts, if suffered to operate according to its natural tendency, produces effects on the sick mind highly salutary. It has saved many a spiritual life, when the symptoms of disease prognosticated a fatal termination.

One of its first effects is, to cause an obedience to the precept of the text, and to make the sufferer CONSIDER. Consideration of itself will often produce a perfect cure of the mental disorder. A great part of the vices of men arise from thoughtlessness, unaccompanied in the earliest stages with intentional malignity.

Young men usually enter into life, pursuing pleasure with the heedless precipitation of an infant chasing a butterfly. Like the infant, they soon stumble and fall. Disease, the consequence of vice, is the first instance of adversity which they experience. And what is the result? They are led to *consider* seriously the bitter fruits, which often grow from the blossoms of pleasure. If they do not dissi-

pate their serious thoughts, but go on to *consider*, they are usually saved from misery, and their first misfortune becomes a blessing. But their propensity to *consider*, is often over-ruled by the example and persuasion of their companions. They are urged to plunge deeper into vice, in order to divest themselves of that delicacy of feeling, which has rendered their degradation painful. Under their tuition the young man unlearns the virtuous precepts of his youth, and blunts the fine sensibilities of unpolluted nature. He divests himself of fear and shame, and though he may not feel uneasiness, yet his insensibility is no better than the numbness of an approaching mortification, the enervated weakness of a palsy.

Having escaped the sense of one misfortune by riot and intemperance, he pursues the same method in destroying the effect of every subsequent visitation, intended by Providence to recall him from error, till at last he proceeds, *without feeling*, in the path that leads to destruction. But his danger is not lessened because he does not see it, nor is his future misery diminished, because he will not feel its approach.

A similar process of gradual degeneracy takes place in all other instances, where the correcting hand of adversity is turned aside by the shield of debauchery, intemperance, vice, and dissipation.

But if adversity were suffered to have its perfect work, it would produce self-knowledge, a due estimate of the world, humility, charity, and devotion, with all their happy consequences.

Adversity would teach that valuable lesson, Know thyself; if, in obedience to the text, it were suffered to teach us to *consider*.

There is scarcely any thing which a man is not apt

to believe, of his merits and his powers, who glides along the stream of life, with a gale of uninterrupted prosperity. Pride, presumption, and irreligion, are the natural consequences. He is confident of strength, when he is evidently weak, and glories in abundance, where he ought to be ashamed of defect. He must therefore, in the nature of things, sometimes fail, and sometimes be in disgrace. If he feels neither the pungency of vexation at failure, nor of shame in dishonour, he will be likely to terminate his thoughtless course amid contempt and misfortune. The latter end of such a man will degenerate from his fortunate beginnings; the more deplorable in his final overthrow, as he will be unable to soften his fall by preparing for it.

He who knows not the infirmities of his nature, or considers not how much he stands in need of heavenly protection, will soon fall into *practical atheism*. Such a state cannot but offend God, and cause him to withdraw his divine assistance; and then no tongue can describe the misery and weakness into which the abandoned son of Adam may be involved.

A little salutary adversity would have prevented all this evil, if it had been suffered to operate in its due course, the production of *serious consideration*. This would have taught, with the knowledge of himself, a diffidence of himself; and the result would have been, that Christian humility which is the foundation of all Christian excellence.

He who, when overtaken by adversity, *considers* the case duly, *considers* his former conduct with attention, will find many faults, many errors, many defects; which he will resolve to correct and supply. He will thus assume a teachable temper, and willingness, to submit to proper guidance. He will thus improve in his conduct; and acting rationally, circumspectly

and cautiously in future, avoid much of that misery and embarrassment, with which the state of unsubdued pride imbittered all his enjoyments. He will be wiser, better, happier. But if, instead of *considering*, when adversity came upon him, he had studiously avoided thinking, and taken the usual method of avoiding care by rushing into vicious or empty pleasure, the lesson of wisdom would have been lost to him, he would have gone on in his erroneous career, unhappy in himself, odious to man, and displeasing to God. But he was called by the stern voice of misfortune, and he listened to her lesson. He is therefore humble, duly diffident, grateful for benefits received from God or man, amiable in his manners, contented in his disposition.

Adversity will teach charity as well as humility, if her scholars will but lend a *purged* ear to her solid instruction. Sorrow naturally softens the heart; and when the heart is suffered to feel as nature dictates, sympathy for others will seldom be deficient.

Adversity convinces the mind of the necessity of mutual assistance. The sufferer has himself felt the want of it, and can judge how painful it would have been, to have suffered unpitied and unassisted. The experience of evil is the best teacher of active charity. But if, when adversity oppresses, dissipation is sought to alleviate the burden, the salutary effect is entirely counteracted; instead of softening, it hardens the heart. It leads at once to impiety and misanthropy. Men are hated and envied, as being possessed of that happiness to which the sufferer thinks he has a claim, and God is accused, in the bitterness of his heart, as neglectful or unjust.

Adversity, when permitted to operate in causing

consideration, has a powerful tendency to inspire the mind with sincere piety and warm devotion.

The sufferer, who has experienced the instability of human affairs, feels a spontaneous inclination to seek for succour of the Almighty. He looks back on his past conduct, and he finds in it many errors, which were lost to his view in the glare of prosperity. This retrospect suggests to him, that his punishment is not the arbitrary infliction of tyrannical power, but the kind correction of paternal love. In consequence of such a persuasion, he bears his portion of evil with patience, mixed with hope, that the same merciful hand, which, for his good, afflicted him, will, when the just effect of his chastisement is produced, hold out the cup of consolation. He reforms his manners, cleanses his heart, reanimates his devotion, that the time of tribulation may be shortened, by immediately bringing forth those fruits of repentance which his sufferings were designed to cultivate and mature.

But if he who is tried by adversity, instead of having recourse to God, flies to the world for comfort, as is too commonly the case, there is every reason to believe that he will soon forget God entirely; as he seems by his conduct to be bound to him neither by love, fear, faith, nor hope. He will proceed in the same wickedness which occasioned the visitation with increased obduracy; and thus provoke the Almighty to try him with severer chastisements, without producing reformation. The total disregard of Providence while men are under affliction, and their full reliance on the vanities of the world for their support under it, if it does not originate in atheism, leads to it directly.

I have thus endeavoured to represent to you the

happy effects of permitting our adversities to take their natural effect on us, to lead us to *consider*; and the ill consequences of plunging into dissipation, as into the fabulous river of Lethe, in the hope of burying all sense of them in oblivion.

Give me leave to recite to you the letter of a heathen,* whose polished mind was adorned with virtues which would not have disgraced Christianity, in which he mentions the advantages to be derived from one species of adversity, bodily indisposition.

"The lingering disorder of a friend of mine," says he, "gave me occasion lately to reflect, that we are never so virtuous as when oppressed with sickness. Where is the man who, under the pain of any distemper, is either solicited by avarice, or inflamed with lust? At such a season he is neither the slave of love, nor the tool of ambition; he looks with indifference upon the charms of wealth, and is content with the smallest portion of it, as being upon the point of leaving even that little. *It is then he recollects* that there are gods, and that he himself is but a man: no mortal is then the object of his envy, his admiration, or his contempt; and the reports of slander neither raise his attention, nor feed his curiosity. He resolves, if he recovers, to pass the remainder of his days in ease and tranquillity; that is, in innocence and happiness. I may therefore lay down to you and to myself a short rule, which the philosophers have endeavoured to inculcate at the expense of many words, and even many volumes, *That we should practise in health, those resolutions which we form in sickness.*"

Thus far the polite heathen. If his advice were followed under every trial of adversity, we might indeed say with our popular poet, *Sweet are the uses*

* Pliny.

of adversity. But sickness differs from other states of suffering, that it disables the sufferer from pursuing dissipating pleasure. It destroys his relish of it, and debilitates his power of seeking it in the lively scenes of gay society. So that the adversity of sickness has a better chance of producing moral improvement, than any other adversity. But even in this state, many do not look up to heaven for assistance, but rely entirely on human means; and when they are recovered, return to their old practices, however injurious both to the mind and the body.

It is right indeed, as it is natural, to seek, under sickness, or any other affliction, all innocent modes of alleviation. I contend against those only which are hurtful, which counteract the effects of mental medicine, and render the sufferer's case, after the remedy has been applied, still more deplorable. I contend against seeking a cure for the wounds of the mind, in the deceitful opiates of vice and extravagance, and for trusting in the sovereign anodynes of the Christian Religion.

Let him therefore, to whom Providence shall send the bitter cup of adversity, endeavour to convert the bitterness into sweetness, by observing the following conduct.

Instead of endeavouring to harden his heart, let him co-operate with the divine grace in softening it. It will thus be rendered, like the loosened soil, fit to receive the seeds of virtue.

But how shall he soften it? By prayer and meditation; by bending under the hand of Heaven with humility and resignation; by considering his past life, and judging impartially, whether his offences have not been such as deserve the punishment inflicted. By confessing his sins, and forming reso-

lutions of amendment. By acts of charity to those who are his companions in adversity; and by acts of justice to those whom he may have injured by thought, word, or deed, in the thoughtless hour of uninterrupted prosperity.

A fountain of comfort will thus be broken up in his heart, a ray of joy will thus burst from the clouds of his imagination, a firm pillar of support will thus be fixed in his soul; and the storms of adversity will, in the end, have no other effect, than to establish more firmly the basis of his felicity.

But let us consider the conduct of men of the world in the day of calamity. The death of those whom we love, is one of the greatest, as it is the most irremediable, misfortunes that can befall human nature. But there is a fashionable practice which entirely destroys the moral good that might be derived from it. The relatives of the departed, immediately on his expiration, fly from the house of mourning, as from a house of pestilence. They will not suffer the melancholy scene to make an impression on their minds. They hasten, with an insensibility which disgraces them as men, to the haunts of folly and vanity, to dissipate the ideas of sorrow and regret. Thus the *great teacher, Death,* whose lessons might be rendered highly beneficial, and greatly conducive to their happiness as well as virtue, is not suffered to detain their attention for a moment. As if hardness of heart were a desirable acquisition, it is studiously promoted, artificially and ingeniously superinduced; and they labour to bring a callus on their feelings, as the artisan at the anvil hardens the steel.

Is the adversity such as arises from the loss of fortune, the disappointment of a favourite scheme, the mortification of pride, or the downfal of ambi-

tion? In this case, does the man of the world *consider* the instability of human affairs; the fugacious nature of external advantages, riches, and honours; the solid value of virtue, reason, piety, contentment? No; he receives the stroke of a visiting Providence with a sullen malignity. He flies to thoughtless and malicious company. He drowns his cares in the intoxicating bowl, or endeavours to repair his loss, or find an oblivion of it, in the alluring occupations of the gaming table. Does he become industrious, frugal, sober; as he would be, if he were wise enough to seek the best methods of alleviating his injuries, and promoting his happiness? No; he loses all relish for industry, frugality, and sobriety. He wallows in indolent luxury, as far as his pecuniary supplies allow, falls into a state of beggarly profligacy, or mean dependence; and, as he lived without honour, and without enjoyment, dies wretched and unlamented!

Let us suppose the adversity to consist in a loss of reputation; instead of endeavouring to recover it by a wiser, a more virtuous, a more circumspect conduct in future, many seek only to divest themselves of all sense of shame, and learn to undervalue the esteem of the world. The consequence of losing all regard to character, is an abasement of mind, which gradually stoops to the vilest behaviour. Nothing is more easy, than the descent from virtue to vice. Conscience may be stifled, by repeated endeavours to suppress it. An audacity in profligate conduct is soon acquired, by our own efforts co-operating with the example and encouragement of audacious and profligate companions; and he who has successfully laboured in destroying his sense of shame and honour among his fellow-creatures, will soon proceed from contempt of man to contempt of God.

If, on the other hand, persons who have suffered in their character would consider, in this heavy adversity, the greatness of the misfortune, they would review their past conduct with censorial rigour, correct bad habits, make restitution for injuries, and in the serious ardour of a true repentance, fly to the protection of God against the envenomed darts of calumny. Such behaviour would be attended with the blessing of God, and would, in time, with the blessing of God, wipe off the stain of the foulest aspersion, which either their own folly, or the malice of others, should have thrown upon their name.

The grand requisite under every kind of adversity, (for to enumerate all the evils of men would transgress the limits of my discourse,) is *to feel it as we ought;* to bear it indeed as men; but to seek for succour of God and our reason, and not from the vanities and vices of the erring multitude. There is a kind of mental intoxication, to which it is as unwise to have recourse in trouble, as it would be, under a disease of body, to seek a temporary, but fatal, remedy in excess of wine.

But when I urge the necessity of feeling our misfortunes duly, I mean that it is necessary to *feel them,* in order to *be improved by them;* but I am far from inculcating the propriety of increasing or exasperating the anguish which they may occasion. What I say, is addressed to the more hardened among mankind, who, defying reason and religion, rely on the world and its follies for support. There are many who, possessed of finer sense, feel with most poignant sorrow all their afflictions, and to these caution is certainly necessary, lest they indulge their grief beyond the bounds of wisdom.

Afflictions in the breasts of such men often cause bodily infirmity and present death. For them the

innocent amusements of the world are necessary, in conjunction with religious comfort, as a part of their medicine. Such will do right to turn their attention from the evil that presses upon them, by harmless recreation, by social intercourse, by the moderate enjoyments of convivial gaiety. But as the world is full of snares, these also must take care, when they have recourse to it for relief, lest, in seeking to forget their cares, they drink too copious draughts of oblivion, and proceed in time to forget their God.

The innocent alleviations of worldly amusement may be united in the mental medicine, with the powerful remedies of religion. To aggravate the evil that is already too heavy to be borne, would be unwise and pregnant with fatal consequences. The mind may be overladen with its burden, and unable to look to him from whom cometh help. It may sink into despair, or be lost in deplorable insanity. There is a religious melancholy, which operates with most malignant influence on human nature. Whatever contributes to prevent, or remove so great a misfortune, must, while it is innocent, be deemed not only lawful, but highly expedient: and be it remembered, that the advice contained in this discourse, is not addressed to the habitually pious and those who have tender and well-affected hearts and scrupulous consciences, but to the hardened, the careless, the profligate, and the profane. The world may afford many alleviations to the good man, when used in the day of affliction, without abusing it; but when relied upon entirely, as the main or only support, it will break under him who leans upon it, like the reed, and perhaps pierce him to the very vitals. The world may be applied as a physician applies a sweet vehicle to disguise, or render palatable, a bitter medicine; but it has no sovereign efficacy in

itself; the efficacious remedy must be derived from the hand of God, who, when he smites and wounds, points out the cure. He can rain manna down from heaven, which will mitigate the bitterness of the draught immediately, and in time overcome it, by a predominance of sweetness. The world cannot afford any thing to transmute the gall into honey. All that it pretends to, is to cause an insensibility, a paralytic affection of the nerves, which is indeed a disease, a dangerous symptom, a partial death. The physician who is anxious for the recovery of his patient, had rather he should be sensible of extreme pain, than possess an ease that arises from an incipient mortification.

If there is truth in Christianity, this insensibility, or hardness of heart, which men of the world endeavour to acquire, is the greatest misfortune, the heaviest adversity that can fall to the lot of man. It either constitutes, or leads to *spiritual death;* when the vital influence of the Holy Spirit is no longer bestowed. Can any evil of this short existence be compared to this deplorable state? Narrow must be the understanding, and corrupt the heart, which does not see and feel, that all the grandeur, power, riches, splendour, and pleasures in the world, are dearly purchased by the loss of the favour, or the GRACE, of God.

This hardness of heart will also preclude enjoyment of prosperity, if prosperity should ever be restored. For what enjoyment can there be, when the feelings are become obtuse. Pleasure, of every kind, depends more upon the susceptibility of the percipient, than the nature of the external object. If the tongue have lost its nervous sensibility, the salt will have lost its savour.

You must have observed, on the slightest inspection

of the Scriptures, that adversity is considered in them as moral medicine, bitter while it is administered, but in its effects sweet and salutary. Let me remind you of a few passages which express in the plainest terms, that adversity is inflicted on the sons of men, like the discipline of a kind instructor, and the correction of an affectionate parent. *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.** *Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.*† *I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men, but my mercy shall not depart away from him.*‡ *Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes:—Nevertheless my loving-kindness I will not utterly take from him.—Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: for he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

By these passages it is evident, however paradoxical it may appear to the common apprehensions of men, that afflictions are providential mercies. Like other benefits bestowed by Heaven, they may fail of producing their natural and intended good effect, by the perverseness of man. But it ought to

* Prov. iii. 12. † Deut. viii. 5. ‡ 2 Sam. vii. 14.

be our study to co-operate with the divine intention, in deriving good from apparent evil.

Let us beware then of trusting in the world only for relief. The world has treacherously deceived its best friends; and the experience of many has confirmed the assertion of Solomon, that all secular views, exclusively and inordinately *secular*, terminate in vanity and vexation.

Instead of plunging into dissipation when misfortune overtakes us, let us fly, like dutiful children, to our heavenly Parent, who will not fail to pity and relieve us, as soon as the discipline inflicted shall appear, by infallible signs, to have produced the desired reformation.

Let us open our hearts for the reception of those consolatory influences which stream as from a fountain of health from the Holy Spirit, the divine Paraclete, the God of consolation. Tried by the fire of affliction, our virtues shall come from the furnace purged of impurity. Our vices shall be destroyed, our natures exalted, sublimed, and fitted for heavenly conversation. Leaving this world, which has ever proved unsatisfactory on the death-bed, we shall thus be prepared for those mansions where adversity cannot come, where the trials of affliction shall be no more necessary, the state of probation being concluded. And *God shall wipe away all tears from the* eyes of the pious and penitent sufferer, *and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.*

But what hope of this happy change can he reasonably entertain, who in his afflictions has not looked up to God, but sought comfort in this world, and its fashionable folly, levity, and vanity? As he never sought, neither will he find comfort from above. The

world, to which he trusted, will shrink from him soon; and then, forlorn and comfortless, he will seek for help, and there will be none to hear his cry. The song, the dance, the proud, the gay companion in sensual gratification, will not be able to afford a ray of comfort in the time of trouble, on the verge of eternity, when the world, and the best things it contains, shall appear of no value; and when its wicked and deceitful fashions shall rise to his view in odious and disgustful shapes and colours.

The sum of all that has been offered is, that in our adversity, we suffer ourselves to be led by it to CONSIDER; that is, to think justly of our own helpless state, of the inability of the world to give us solid comfort, of the uses that may be derived from our humiliation, of the power of God to turn our sorrow into joy, by the invisible but powerful operation of his Spirit on our hearts; of the infinitely superior value of his grace and favour to all that the world can give or take away, of the shortness of life, and the rewards of a better; which, if we act consistently with our profession as Christians, we must believe capable of compensating our afflictions, which are comparatively but for a moment, with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. *The God of all grace therefore, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever.* Amen.*

* 1 Peter, v. 10, 11.

SERMON XII.

CHRISTIAN POLITENESS.

ROMANS, xii. 9, 10.—*Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil. Cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.*

THOUGH man is formed for society, he yet possesses many qualities in his natural and unimproved state, which are extremely unsocial. In this state, pride and selfishness are found to predominate in him to so great a degree, as almost to confine him to separation and solitude. Some philosophers have indeed maintained, that a state of nature is a state of war; but whether this representation be just or not, it is evidently certain that the sweets of social intercourse cannot be enjoyed in perfection, till man is highly polished and completely civilized.

But even in a country far removed from a state of nature, there will remain some relics of the native ferocity, unless peculiar care is bestowed in the formation and improvement of manners. Hence rules of decorum and politeness have been established, to teach men a mutual renunciation of their own claims, in order to promote mutual satisfaction. For the sake of preserving harmony, civilities of various kinds are exchanged, like coin, among those who cannot possibly have any personal regard for each other, and who frequently entertain a latent enmity. *The words of their mouth are smoother than butter, but*

war is in their hearts; their words are softer than oil, yet are they drawn swords. It is however very certain, that politeness contributes greatly to render human life both sweet and pacific. It is therefore highly valuable. It is not without reason that the world agrees to esteem it. But we must lament that it is too often united with insincerity, and appears on examination to be but the counterfeit of a virtue. Indeed, it originates for the most part, in selfishness, refined and improved by the subtlety of art and experience. It is fair to the view, but internally unsound. It may indeed answer beneficial purposes, even in its imperfect state; but it is certainly desirable that it should be what it appears to be, the genuine result of a humane and benevolent disposition.

It is then the purpose of the present Discourse, to recommend the practice of politeness, on the principles of Christianity; to evince indeed, that he who possesses the genuine virtues of the Christian religion, must be, in the best and truest sense of the word, *polite*; and that the sincerest Christian may most justly claim the title of the *real gentleman.* In a word, I shall endeavour to make it appear, that the instructions of the humble Jesus are peculiarly adapted to correct our pride and selfishness, those qualities which possess the most unsocial tendency.

In the first place let us take a view of those fashionable methods which the world establishes, in order to regulate those unpleasant dispositions. Let us examine them, as they appear to be laid down by the professed teachers of politeness, or the celebrated *art of pleasing.*

So narrow and unphilosophical are the instructors in this species of worldly wisdom, that this life, and the external advantages of riches, rank, and honours,

appear to them not only the chief, but the only good. How then does the father begin his paternal addresses to his child? Not like Solomon; "*My son, get wisdom, get understanding,*" in the ways of God and virtue; but, "Gain a knowledge of the world, and learn, at an early age, to deceive all with whom you converse, while you can render them instrumental to your private interest.

"Away with prejudices, (and under prejudices are comprehended all moral and religious virtues,) away with diffidence and delicacy! Let your own interest and advancement be invariably your objects. Let these employ your meditations by night, and your activity by day; but remember that your interest and advancement depend entirely on the favour of others. To gain that favour you must please them. Now men are pleased rather by agreeable accomplishments, and by little attentions, than by solid attainments, or by arduous virtues. Cultivate then the art of pleasing; an art which cannot well be practised, as the world is now constructed, without constant simulation and dissimulation. Regard not that scrupulous veneration for truth, which men who know nothing of the world are so apt to recommend and applaud. Truth, the whole truth, must then only be told, when it is not your interest that it should be concealed, or misrepresented.

"Be ready," continues the sagacious child of this world, who is wiser in his generation than the children of light, "be ready to flatter all with whom you converse, and who are able to serve you, though you know them to be, in every respect, the most undeserving of mankind. Flattery will smooth your way to the highest stations of life, even to the palace; while truth and sincerity are left to starve in the beggary of a cottage.

"Learn the arts of insinuation. These will pave your way to preferment, much more effectually than modest merit. Modest merit is indeed," he exclaims, "another name for weakness and folly. Assume the appearance of every thing agreeable and good; but be not at the pains to acquire the reality. In the very attempt you may probably lose the appearance; for seriousness, study, and reflection, tend to cloud the brows, to superinduce an inflexibility, and to suggest such scruples as are fatal to advancement. Be yours an easier, and a securer method. Address yourself to the eyes, to the fancy, to the heart. You will thus carry all before you; and reason, conscience, and religion, of which the pious talk so much, will toil after you in vain. While they are in rags, you shall be *clothed in purple and fine linen.*"

Such are the instructions of him to whom this world and its vanities are all that is to be desired. He utters them with confidence, he glories in the superiority of his wisdom, he derides all those who point the way to happiness through the paths of religion and virtue. He it is who has at length discovered the chief good of man, and the most infallible method of obtaining it. Poor, deluded, short-sighted creature! he has not a soul capable of soaring up to Heaven. He cannot aspire at an object so noble and glorious as immortality. This little speck on which he dwells, is to him the universe. There he crawls like the earth-worm, which is not sensible of any thing else existing, but the dirt which it devours, and in which it is enveloped.

What can be more wretched and contemptible, than the politeness which arises from such motives as the man of the world so arrogantly recommends? It is like a gaudy flower, which derives all its nourishment from the corrupted mass of a dunghill.

For does it not originate in all the qualities which constitute the baseness of a villain? Falsehood, deceit, lying, adulation, meanness, hypocrisy, impudence, and every quality which is either abominable or despicable, are concerned in its production and perfection.

Look abroad into real life. Who are the men who have chiefly excelled in this spurious politeness, the mean offspring of that very pride and selfishness, which *true politeness,* the child of *humanity,* was meant to destroy or restrain? Who are they but sordid sycophants, avaricious cultivators of the great, for their own advantage, despisers of merit, enemies to all who seem to interrupt their progress, by deserving better than themselves; debauchees, and violaters of innocence and hospitality, for the gratification of their own vicious propensities? Are they not ready to desert any friend, and to betray any cause, to promote their own interest, to acquire popularity, to conciliate the favour of a court? Facts and actual experience abundantly evince, that these adepts in the *false art of pleasing,* are the vilest of the human race.

These very plausible and pleasing men, if they were seen without disguise in their proper colours, would appear to be hideous and disgustful. Mark their actions in the recesses of private life, in their own families, or wherever they can secure concealment. You will see no more of softness and smoothness, no more of deference and humility, no more of benevolence and generosity; but you will see pride, ill-nature, asperity, extreme avarice, and complete selfishness, in every action. The mask which is worn while they act their part in the public theatre, drops off behind the scenes; and he who strutted in all the brilliancy of artificial ornament, resigns the

tinsel vest, and exhibits to view his real state of meanness and beggary.

Thus it appears that the mere worldly species of politeness is a poor and contemptible quality. Pleasing as it appears, it is all deformity within. The ugliest of passions, views, and inclinations, are chiefly concerned in its production. It is indeed a base, counterfeit coin, which, though it may frequently pass in currency among careless observers, ought to be cried down by the voice of general detestation.

Let us turn from the glossy, but unsubstantial, virtues of the world, to the solid excellences recommended in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us repeat the beautiful precepts contained in the text. *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil. Cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.*

Here we behold politeness founded on real affection and philanthropy. *Let love be without dissimulation.* How different from the advice of the worldly wise, which directs us to conduct all our schemes by pretending friendship which we do not feel, and by the assistance of the basest dissimulation! Here we are taught to show an affection for all mankind, and to let that affection proceed from the humane sentiments of a generous and benevolent heart.

Abhor that which is evil. Cleave to that which is good. Which passages I do not understand as general commands to hate evil, and to do that which is good, but as particularly meant to direct us in forming our *social connections*. They may, I think, be thus interpreted. Dare to entertain sentiments of dislike to bad persons, however elevated their rank, and opulent their conditions. Seek not their friend-

ship. Solicit not their patronage; but show that the splendour of their fortunes cannot throw a lustre over the shaded parts of their characters. On the other hand, *Cleave to that which is good.* Connect yourself with good men. Love them sincerely, without regarding their worldly condition; and evince your attachment to goodness, however concealed by the lowness and obscurity of its possessor's situation.

Be kindly affectioned one towards another, with brotherly love. It is the peculiar excellence of Christianity, that it has taught its true possessors, to view mankind in a light more endearing to each other, than that in which they had before appeared. It represents all men, as children of one father, as real brethren, bound to love each other, not only by the common ties of humanity, but also of consanguinity. If men would adopt this idea, and act in conformity to it, no other rules would be necessary to secure all the sweets of a polite behaviour. He who is kindly affectioned with brotherly love toward those with whom he converses, will have but little occasion to consult any other rules of politeness, than those which are engraven in his own bosom.

But the text adds a clause, which contains in it the *very essentials of the art of pleasing,* and of all obliging behaviour. *In honour preferring one another;* that is, we are to pay that mutual respect to each other which we mutually demand, and consequently to make those reciprocal concessions, which contribute to smooth and to sweeten all our intercourse. Is there any thing recommended by the writers of that nation which values itself on the graces of external behaviour, that can conduce more, not only to render life comfortable, but to embellish it, than this advice, from a book which is too often laid aside by the pre-

tenders to superior polish and refinement? Can any of the boasted subtilties of philosophy teach man to repress the tumours of vanity, and the greediness of self-will, so effectually, as this short admonition authorized by the sanction of a Divine revelation? Shall any one dare, after duly considering the full force of this whole passage, to assert that Christianity is a religion inconsistent with all those modes of social intercourse, which the wisest of men and universal practice have established as the most expedient? For does it not improve them to their highest perfection, rendering them pleasant as well as profitable, and adding to that agreeableness which arises from artifice, the permanency, solidity, and beauty of truth?

It is indeed evident, that the spirit and genius of Christianity are peculiarly calculated to soften and embellish the familiar commerce of human life. The very first leading, striking, prominent, excellence of our religion, is charity, good-will, benevolence. Many heroic virtues were admirably recommended by Pagan moralists; but the social, the friendly, the domestic, and relative, virtues are no where enforced so frequently, or so forcibly, as in the Gospel. But do not these immediately tend to produce whatever is amiable, graceful, and kind, not only in our temper, but in our behaviour? From such roots the tree cannot but yield fruit, beautiful to the eye, and delicious to the palate. The politeness and art of pleasing, taught by the world and its idolatrous votaries, originate from the father of lies, the enemy of mankind; who, to effect his hateful purposes, is able to hide his own ugliness in the fairest semblance. To facilitate the production of mischief, he can put on an angel's form. So also can those who become his subjects. But the Christian, out of the good

treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good words and kind actions. A little trial or examination detects the falsehood and hollowness of the worldly wise man; but the more the Christian is examined, the more lovely do his friendly offices and behaviour appear, because they have the solid foundation of sincerity.

Humility is also a principal virtue required by the humble Jesus. But is there any thing better adapted, than humility rightly understood, and uniformly practised, to preserve peace, and to exclude from company all that is rude, uncouth, and disagreeable? If from *pride cometh contention*, from humility cometh union. The humility of the gospel is quite different from meanness of spirit, or abject submission. It is a rational and noble suppression of our self-love and pride, in a conscientious obedience to the religion we believe. It arises from magnanimity. It teaches neither wantonly to give, nor hastily to take, offence. It judges not others, it interferes not with their business, it is contented with doing its own duty, and seeking that path of life, which leads through the silent vale of innocence, piety, and peace. Excellent as is this virtue, in promoting the pleasure and comfort of family and friendly intercourse, let it be remembered, for the honour of Christianity, that it is no where recommended in its pure and genuine sense, but in the page of Scripture.

Is there any quality recommended in books on the art of pleasing in company, or any thing in the practice of the gay and fashionable, more likely to promote peace and happiness, ease and enjoyment, than genuine, unaffected candour? But candour also, no less than humility, is powerfully enforced, as well

as beautifully described in the New Testament. What is it but candour, and indeed every requisite to politeness, which is thus described under the appellation of charity? *Charity suffereth long, and is kind. Charity envieth not.* CHARITY VAUNTETH NOT ITSELF, IS NOT PUFFED UP, DOTH NOT BEHAVE ITSELF UNSEEMLY, SEEKETH NOT HER OWN, IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED, THINKETH NO EVIL, *rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth*—BEARETH ALL THINGS, BELIEVETH ALL THINGS, HOPETH ALL THINGS, *endureth all things.* In this copious and beautiful description, one would have imagined that the apostle was painting those very qualities which contribute to render company agreeable, and the appearance of which is often solicitously sought, with far other motives than those of religion or virtue.

Meekness is another grace peculiar to the true Christian. How beautiful a grace! Did it ever enter into the heart of a wicked worldling to recommend any quality so pleasing, and so conducive to quietness, and to every pleasure and comfort for which the familiar intercourse of man with man is so eagerly desired? *I am meek and lowly,* says the great Author of our salvation; and if we, whom meekness and lowliness more particularly become, would put on the *ornament,* as the apostle emphatically styles it, *of a meek and quiet spirit,* we should not often want any of those false ornaments, which pride invents, and folly admires. I will repeat the passage nearly in the apostle's words, and will generalize that instruction which he addressed particularly to wives. *Let not your adorning be the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the* HIDDEN MAN OF THE HEART, *in that which is*

not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

The forgiveness of injuries and insults, which indeed is the natural consequence of meekness and humility, and which Christianity in a peculiar manner enjoins, conduces immediately to peace and tranquillity in every degree and mode of our social intercourse. But what instructions on this head do the men of the world afford? They tell us of honour which we are bound to maintain, even by the commission of murder. And what is this honour? It by no means deserves the name which it assumes; for it is a combination of pride, vanity, malice, and revenge. It is diabolical in its principles, and accursed in its consequences. It is destructive of peace and harmony, by rendering men captious, easily provoked, and indeed prone to every propensity and practice incoherent with Christian charity. Such is false honour, the vain idol of a wicked world. But Christianity teaches a sublimer sense of honour, than ever entered into the heart of the most renowned duellist to conceive. It teaches a greatness of soul that overlooks those injuries which exasperate the poor furious worldling. Unmoved, like the rock amidst the storm, the Christian rises superior to all the attacks of the proud man's contumely. Serene and placid, he shines on high, like the sun in the upper regions, far above the clouds and vapours which hide its lustre from the earth. Is he not then capable of becoming a much more agreeable companion, than the haughty man of fashion, who often seeks a quarrel that he may distinguish his spirit, and be celebrated in the world of gallantry? The true Christian, who has subdued the ebullitions of pride, envy, malice, and revenge, is not only sure of

not disturbing tranquillity, but of communicating love, joy, and peace, among all with whom he has any intercourse.

The Spirit of God, indeed, communicates to all, on whose hearts its influence is shed, the most lovely and agreeable, as well as the most courteous dispositions and habits of behaviour; what indeed are represented in Scripture as the genuine fruits of the spirit. *The fruit of the spirit is* LOVE, JOY, PEACE, LONG SUFFERING, GENTLENESS, GOODNESS, MEEKNESS. But the works of the flesh, that is of those who live the lives of men of the world, are *hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, envyings, murders.* But are not some of the most accomplished men, according to the accomplishments of the world, those who live professed according to the flesh, that is, to use the apostle's words, *in adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness?* Ought the varnished behaviour of such men, the little arts of adulation, and the little ornaments of dress and external appearance, which they studiously adopt merely for the sake of their own sordid interest; ought these to give more pleasure, and be esteemed more agreeable than the cordial kindness, the sincere friendship, the charity, the patience, the humility, the meekness, the forgiveness, which soften the bosom of the Christian gentleman? O fools and blind, who judge thus absurdly! He who has taught himself to practise the rules prescribed in the sermon on the Mount, is capable of becoming infinitely more agreeable and polite as a companion, than any splendid infidel who has learned to glitter in the gayest courts of polished Europe.

Let me conclude this subject, by earnestly entreating those who would possess, in perfection, the true art of pleasing, to begin their improvement in it, by

purifying and regulating their hearts according to the Christian model. Thus, while they learn to please others most effectually and most permanently, they will also improve themselves in such habits and virtues as will have a most benign influence in promoting their own enjoyment. They will have no occasion for deceit, or those tricks and stratagems which can never be practised without painful anxiety; without such doubts and uneasiness attending them, as no success, in the object they pursue, can possibly compensate: their own bosoms will be calm and serene, uninjured and uninjurious, smooth as the stream which glides in its proper channel, and diffuses beauty and fertility on every plant which happily vegetates near its margin.

We are apt to reverence our fellow-creatures servilely. We idolize them; not indeed from philanthropy, but from a mean timidity, and an anxious regard for our own interest. We forget, in the attention we pay to the great, and indeed to all who can gratify our avarice or ambition, the reverence we owe to ourselves, and the duties we owe to God.

The reverence we owe to ourselves should teach us to have a particular regard to our own consciences; to please men, so far only as is consistent with pleasing our own hearts; that is, so far as is consistent with truth, honesty, and all our duties, moral and religious. It should teach us to practise, not what may advance our temporal interest only, or what may furnish a transient pleasure, but what *will bring us peace at the last, and fit us for* better *society*, than any which can be found on earth, that *of angels, and of just men made perfect in heaven.*

The reverence we owe to God should render us more solicitous to please him than men, however

exalted, however able to advance us to honour and profit; for, let us seriously reflect, how little will avail the favour of the world, and the greatest potentates in it, against the displeasure of the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, the Most High God.

SERMON XIII.

ON THE DUTY OF PREVENTING EVIL, BY ACTUAL COERCION, AS WELL AS BY ADVICE AND REMONSTRANCE.

1 SAM. XXV. 32, 33.—*And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me.*

And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, who hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand.

THE text exhibits a remarkable instance of human folly, and the happiness of restraining it. David had rashly engaged in a vindictive enterprise, which could not but redound to his disgrace, and involve him in guilt. He intended to avenge himself with his own hand, where there had been but a slight provocation; and to shed innocent blood, in a most unjust and dishonourable cause. But Abigail met him as he was on his journey, and, by a seasonable remonstrance, deterred him from the execution of his sanguinary purpose. On her representation, he sees his intention in its true light, and abhors it. Exulting in the conquest over himself, he breaks out in the words of the text, which I have here selected for your present consideration.

I mean to take occasion from these words, to lay before you the wisdom and the kindness of preventing

mischief, either by good advice, or by more effectual precautions.

Nothing is more common than to hear parents deploring the profligacy of their children, when arrived at the manly age. The pleasure which their little ones afforded them, is then converted into anguish. Their own offspring is become a scourge to them. They wish, when perhaps it is too late, that they had exercised that wholesome discipline over them, which prudence directs and experience fully justifies.

The parent advises his son to pursue a wiser conduct, and laments his degeneracy; but the advice is too late. The taste of the young man is vitiated, his heart is corrupted, his habits are confirmed. Ruin and disgrace involve both the parent and the child in misery, which timely care might easily have prevented.

There are many cases worse than mere ignorance, and want of accomplishments or qualifications, which careless parents will have cause to deplore. The boy, no sooner arrives at the years which should be years of discretion, than he shows the dispositions of a prodigal son. The parent is surprised, and ready to blame every thing and every person but himself, often the sole cause of the evil which he laments. He allowed his son, when a child, every licentious indulgence, and encouraged all his capricious wants. Unaccustomed to restraint, the young man cannot bear it with patience. He eagerly obeys the impulse of his passions and appetites. They grow more unruly by indulgence. The consequences are, indeed, severe punishments. The youth suffers much more than he ever enjoyed. Happy, if at last he grows wise by dear-bought experience! How much less trouble would have

been felt, less expense and less infamy incurred, if proper care had been taken, in early youth, to prevent, in the very bud, the growth of a vicious principle.

Health, peace, innocence, reputation, and fortune, might have been preserved uninjured by timely care, though they can seldom be recovered when once they are lost.

If these things were duly considered, none surely would be disposed to controvert the necessity of early instruction in piety and virtue, as well as in the polite accomplishments and the pursuits of science and elegant letters. The greater part of mankind are happily persuaded of this necessity; but yet there are some among the frivolous and pleasurable, who seem to pay little attention to it, and even to argue against all strictness and regularity of discipline. They usually suffer severely in consequence of their mistake, and are frequently found, in the advanced periods of life, to acknowledge it with shame and sorrow.

For the actual prevention of young persons from folly and ruinous expense and dissipation, let no one persuade himself that precept and admonition will be sufficient. They will indeed effect much; but, I think, it will be necessary to add to them, some real restraints, by the exercise of personal authority. Parents are too timid in the exertion of that power with which nature and reason have invested them, for the laudable purpose of preserving their inexperienced offspring from those dangers which themselves have remarked in the voyage of life. The following conduct may perhaps be advisable.

If a son show a disposition to loose and irregular pleasures, he should be removed from all places where temptations particularly abound. His pe-

cuniary allowance should be diminished. He should be kept from theatres, and all other amusements more particularly dangerous; and at a proper age, should be, led to form some virtuous connection, in which his passions may be gratified, consistently with honour, principle, health, and fortune. All this care might indeed fail, if the disposition were extremely vicious; but nothing would have been omitted for which a parent would deem himself culpable: a child would thus have the best chance of becoming virtuous and happy, and the parent's sorrow, if the case should be incurable, would not receive any addition from self-condemnation.

I lay it down as a maxim, that to promote as much happiness, and to prevent as much evil as possible, is the duty of every good man; and it is a duty which he owes to mankind in general. How much more urgent to the performance of it, is the consideration, that the happiness of those whom we have been instrumental in introducing into a world where misery abounds, depends upon our conduct of them before they can conduct themselves with safety and propriety?

But many are deterred from the exercise of discipline on their children, by the idea that it is to be unreasonably severe on those whom they are bound by duty, and inclined by nature, to indulge. But they consider only immediate consequences, without any regard to the future and remote. That only is kind, which is essentially and ultimately beneficent. Now, improper and excessive indulgence pleases for the moment, but produces permanent misfortune.

Let us look forward to the age of maturity and confirmed manhood, or of old age; and let us ask our child in these stages of life, his real opinion, whether he approves excessive indulgence, or

reasonable restraint? His experience will have corrected the errors of his earlier age, and he will be ready to thank, with heart-felt gratitude, that paternal hand which was held out to restrain him from evil, and to guide him to good. In the words of the text he will say, remembering his father, "*Blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou who hast kept me,*" by the salutary restraint of a careful education, from those evils which have caused many to fall, on my right hand, and on my left.

Tutors and guardians are representatives of parents; and therefore whatever recommends salutary restraint to the practice of parents, must have equal weight with tutors and guardians.

Tutors have indeed, in some situations, as in the universities for instance, the care of young men, when they are liberated from parental observation, and when their passions render their conduct extremely dangerous. It is necessary, therefore, that tutors, in this case, should exert themselves with peculiar spirit and authority. They are apt to content themselves with general advice, and to decline the imposition of actual restraint, as impossible, because it is difficult. But this conduct appears to me to argue no less a want of judgment than of courage. Young men, like the spirited and unruly steed, require to be curbed and guided by a strong bridle; and however impatient they may be, will often, at the very time, have sense enough to see the propriety of their tutor's controul; and hereafter, goodness enough to thank him for his activity, in preventing their ruin.

But from the necessity of imposing actual restraints on young men, I infer the expediency of engaging such only in the office of tutors as possess a personal authority. Many men, not without

learning or ingenuity, are totally destitute of those talents which alone can qualify for government; I mean a commanding, authoritative spirit, which awes the audacity of youth into due obedience.

A man, happily endowed with this noble quality, is indeed born to command; and he will not be contented merely with haranguing his pupils on the subject of temperance and regularity; but will insist on the practice of those virtues, by sternly reprimanding and punishing the neglect of them, whenever he discovers it.

In order to discover it, he will deem it his duty to follow his pupil closely, and at hours when he is not expected. He will claim and exercise the privilege of breaking in upon his retirement, at whatever time he shall think it proper. With a tutor, thus vigilant and authoritative at hand, what pupil would ever dare to be guilty of any flagrant enormity, or be able to contract any profligate habits?

Pupils in the universities, and young men in general, frequently involve themselves in debt, and all the misery of embarrassed circumstances. In this state, no attention is paid to letters or science. Their minds are entirely engaged by the fears of a creditor, or in devising expedients to raise money. The parent is urged by importunate demands, which his prudence is obliged to refuse; and the refusal alienates the son's affection, and unhappily causes him to forget his filial piety. Hence domestic infelicity. Finding no comfort at home, the youth resolves to seek it abroad. He too often hopes to find it at the tavern and the brothel. The misery which must follow, I shall not describe, as it is obvious to every one's imagination. But however great and complicated it ultimately becomes, it might have been effectually prevented by the actual and efficient

interposition of the tutor. And *blessed had he been*, if he had exerted himself in defiance of all opposition, in controlling his pupil, and keeping him from the beginnings of evil by actual coercion. He could not have had a finer opportunity for the exercise of Christian charity. There are few means by which he could have occasioned more good, and prevented more evil.

And what is said, respecting the necessity of preventing the pupil from incurring debt, is equally applicable to the prevention of all other evil in its first origin; as for instance, habits of gaming, of drunkenness, and of debauchery. But from Parents, I proceed to the consideration of the duty of Masters, in the prevention of evil.

Masters may be said to represent both tutors and parents. As tutors, they are bound to instruct their dependants in the art or trade which they profess; and as parents, to preserve them from evil, and promote their moral and spiritual advantage. But they are too much inclined to acquiesce in the inferior parts of their duty, those which are employed in the care of temporal things, or in qualifying for a lucrative occupation. The consequence is, that many young men, carefully brought up by their parents, no sooner enter on their apprenticeships, than they give themselves up to a dissolute profligacy, which terminates in the ruin of all that is most valuable. It is in vain to expect success in their trade or art. No due attention will be given, in the midst of the avocations of lust and debauchery, to the sober employments of an honest trade. If they ever become masters themselves, they usually expend more than they gain, and finish their career by insolvency, imprisonment, and a broken heart, with a broken fortune.

A thousand injuries of various kinds, which these

young men suffer during their youth, are imputable to the neglect of Masters. I must therefore exhort traders and merchants, who have occasion to engage young assistants, and who covenant with them for their services during seven years, the most susceptible in human life, to consider how great a duty is incumbent on them; to consider, that as they take the children from the eye of the parent, it is their part to supply the parent's place; and not only to provide clothing for the body, but good principles and sentiments for the soul.

They will therefore require their young assistants to frequent the public worship on Sundays, and to read good books in the intervals of leisure throughout the week. They will require them to keep good hours, and they will endeavour to know the characters of the company with which their dependants associate; forbidding the growth of every improper connection immediately on its commencement. This care, which is no more than their duty absolutely requires, will prevent evils innumerable, and misery inconceivable. Industry, honesty, and sobriety, will, in consequence of it, adorn and enrich the mercantile walks of life.

But I proceed to consider Masters in another relation; that which they bear to menial servants. The menial servants of a family have been kindly called humble friends. If they are faithful, they are often the most beneficial friends whom a man can possess. But however they behave, it is certainly incumbent on Masters to exert themselves in preventing that evil, of which they are the first to feel the effects, and to complain. Punishment avails but little in a country where slavery is not tolerated. If the Master and servant disagree, on whatever side the fault may lie, a separation com-

monly takes place, and there the matter terminates; but where punishment fails, prevention may succeed.

In the first place, it should be an inviolable rule in reputable families, never to admit a menial servant, without an oral character from the relinquished family. Characters are indeed usually required, but with too little caution and strictness of inquiry.

When once a servant is admitted with a good character, let due attention be paid by the Master to its preservation. Let him not open his mouth solely for reproof and imperious command, but for advice and instruction. Let him observe the hours of leisure, not indeed with austerity, but with that friendly vigilance which tends to keep the servant from the haunts of vice, drunkenness, or dishonesty; from the temptations to sin, and the corruption of bad example. We shall be rewarded by the improvement of their principles, and by the consequent improvement of their behaviour; but if this should not happen, we shall be rewarded by the consciousness of having done a most important duty; most important to many of our fellow-creatures in subordinate situations, who have no instructors but ourselves; and most important to society at large, the welfare of which must always be much affected by the morals and behaviour of the inferior classes.

Is there any one who will deny, that the care of Masters, which I have recommended, would contribute greatly to prevent theft, robbery, and all those crimes which disgrace human nature, and injure the community? Masters have it more in their power than magistrates, to mend the police, and correct the profligacy of any country. As good citizens, therefore, no less than as good Christians, those Masters of families will deserve high approbation, who labour to prevent that evil among their servants, which,

though it may be punished, cannot be committed without diffusing private, social, and public misery.

The prevention of evil, though an object worthy the attention of the wisest and best of men, is comparatively easy. It is said of strife, that it is *as when one letteth out water*. The same may be said of all evil. At first it may be stopped in its progress without important or incurable mischief, and with little difficulty; but let it once take its own violent course, and like the inundation over the meadows, it cannot be reduced to its channel, till it shall have overwhelmed many a fair flower, and swept away the corn that laughed in the vallies, and the vine and olive trees which promised abundance.

A thousand occasions occur, by which a man, with very little exertion or trouble, may be able to prevent great mischief; and let it be remembered as a maxim, that whenever it is in a man's power, it is at the same time his duty. Let not indolence prevail on any man to neglect his duty, for he can in no respect be active to so good a purpose; and let not any one presume to say, It is not my business, and why should I interfere? but let him recollect, that there is a great difference between the interference of a busy-body, and of a Christian actuated by pure benevolence.' The one is influenced by selfish motives, and the gratification of his own curiosity; the other acts from humanity, and a sense of his duty as a follower of Jesus Christ.

But while we endeavour to prevent evil in others, we must keep a constant eye over ourselves, to prevent our own corruption. Many and great are the miseries of life into which they fall, who are not upon their guard to watch the beginnings of evil, and to check the first tendencies to deviation from virtue. To gain wisdom by experience of the pains

and penalties of folly, is a costly purchase. How much better to prevent the wound from festering, than, after suffering much anguish, to find at last a tardy cure!

But as we are weak, and, after our best endeavours, unable of ourselves to help ourselves, let us never omit to seek assistance of him who has taught us to supplicate him daily for deliverance from evil. And he can deliver. His grace, his preventing grace, will be a shield against all the fiery darts of the wicked one. In his strength our weakness shall triumph.

God is able to foresee consequences in their causes; to see evil likely to become the fruit, while the blossom appears to us goodly, and worthy to be cherished with all our care. To him, then, let us have recourse for guidance and support, as we sojourn here in the pilgrimage of life. We must do our utmost for ourselves, but after all depend upon him. His hand acting in secret, like the magnetic influence on the needle, shall guide the feet of the faithful into the paths of peace. His hand unseen, like the repellent power of electricity, shall turn away many a dart dipt in poison, and pointed at our vitals. He shall guard us from the pestilence that walketh at midnight, and from the arrow that flieth at noon-day. To him, then, let us fly for succour; duly remembering to be thankful for the many deliverances from evil unknown, and dangers unsuspected, which every one here assembled has frequently experienced; though peradventure at the time unconscious of the mercy. O let us all join in one voice of gratitude, and say, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath preserved us to this day, and enabled us to meet in his presence, as at this time; and blessed be the means of grace, which he*

has now and often afforded us; and blessed be his Providence, who has not lead us into temptation without a way to escape; and who, in instances more in number than tongue can tell, has delivered us from the evil in which our own folly and wickedness would have involved us for ever!

SERMON XIV.

ON PURSUING VISIONARY SCHEMES OF HAPPINESS, WITHOUT ATTENDING TO SCRIPTURE, AND REVEALED RELIGION.

JEREMIAH, ii. 13.—*Men forsake the fountains of living water, and hew them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*

IT is true, that every rational creature possesses a right to judge for himself in every thing which conberns the choice of his principles, either in religion or morality; but it is also true, that every one is by no means qualified to exercise this right, without instruction and advice. Many want natural abilities, to form a safe judgment in affairs of importance; and many are not sufficiently furnished with the observations of experience. But it is observable, that when the choice is once made, however weakly or ignorantly, and to whatever evil it may lead, it is usually retained with a degree of perseverance, which may be justly termed invincible obstinacy.

It is then of great consequence to direct men rightly in fixing their choice. This is not difficult. Every one can point out the broad path of the national religion, and of the morality derivable from revelation. The difficulty consists, in persuading

men to walk in the right way, without deviating into error. A thousand temptations in the external world, a thousand internal passions and infirmities, unite their force, to allure and drive men from the straight path, into the dangerous obliquities of error.

In infancy some care is commonly bestowed to inculcate good principles. The catechism is taught, and the Bible read. This early instruction yields, after the boyish age, to the pursuit of such accomplishments as contribute to adorn the mind, or furnish it with lucrative science. The youth steps out into the world, and before he has quite entered it, his ears are addressed by a charmer, to whose voice it is difficult not to listen with delight. Pleasure, which, during the period of tutelage, engaged only a part of her votary's attention, now usurps the whole of it.

The impressions favourable to virtue, which were formed in early infancy, are soon obliterated. Happiness is sought in habitual intemperance. She is sought there; but she cannot be found. The pursuit is attended with many severe losses and great inconveniencies. With difficulty the votary is convinced, that he has been sacrificing costly sacrifices on the altar of a deity, who can never reward him with, what alone can satisfy him, substantial and durable felicity.

He next assumes a serious face, and resolves to compensate the disappointment he lately incurred in the eager pursuit of pleasure, by pursuing, with equal ardour, riches and honours. He makes connections conducive to his interest. He is anxious to please the great and powerful. He attends the levee with more devotion than the church. Perhaps, indeed, he attends not the church at all; but not being able to find time enough in six days for the multiplicity

of his business, he spends the day appropriated to God, in the service of Mammon.

God, whom he neglects, frustrates his purposes; for what can he mean, but to be happy in consequence of his accumulation? But does his happiness increase with his riches? Is he more tranquil, contented, resigned? On the contrary, it has been the observation of the best moralists; that the love of riches increases with the possession of them; and as the love of riches increases, so also infallibly increase the cares and anxieties of life. Contentment is by no means the consequence of opulence. Riches are heaped up, and he who labours for them knows not who shall enjoy them. He cannot enjoy them himself, so as to be satisfied with them, so as to say to himself with entire conviction, I am now completely happy; all my desires are accomplished, and I have not a want unsupplied. On the contrary, he is ready, after all his labour and success, to lament with the wise man, *that all is vanity.*

It is exactly so with honours, titles, exalted rank, and civil pre-eminence. They appear with alluring colours at a distance. They excite industry, and are so far beneficial to society; but, to their possessors, they are seldom the sources of entire satisfaction. To experience let the appeal be made. Who more eager after trifling amusements to pass away the time, than the rich and great, the titled rulers of kingdoms and empires? Something is still wanted in the most prosperous state and elevated rank, on which the mind can rest with firm reliance. Religion only can supply the defect; yet the attention is attracted, and the affections engaged by the idols of the world. The day of consideration is postponed from time to time, till death arrives, and prevents the possibility of it. But the votary of this

world seldom departs from it, without giving a death-bed testimony in favour of religion. Reluctant as he was, in the season of health and vigour, to acknowledge the vanity of riches and honours, he at last confesses, in the anguish of his heart, that his prudence has been folly, and that, in the multitude of his cares, he has neglected the one thing needful, that which reconciles a man to himself, and speaks peace to his troubled soul, his duty to his God.

But let not the observations of the preacher be confined to men of the world only. Men of letters, men of refined and cultivated intellects, those who seem to be wiser than others, and who frequently look down with contempt on the vulgar, are no less remote from the happiness which they pursue, when they seek it independently of God. Too many are found in the walks of science, who have turned their backs upon the temple; too many follow the leaders of some modern sect, who have turned with scorn from Jesus Christ. Their looks and demeanour are proud, but what do they possess which can justly entitle them to their own veneration? They know more than some others of human arts and sciences, and of languages; but they are strangers to the wisdom which is from above, and leads unto salvation. Their pride, which breaks out in every thing they write, is a proof of their infirmity; and there are many instances on record to prove, that the infidel writers have been often the slaves of passions very degrading, and upon the whole more miserable, than those humble mortals whom they contemned because less enlightened by the rays of science.

What then shall be said? Are not pleasures, riches, honour, and knowledge, good and desirable? If not, we may well ask, in the words of the Psalter,

Who will show us any good? I answer, that they are all desirable; and all to be considered as the blessings of a benignant Providence, when they are possessed according to what they are, as subordinate to the things which pertain to our spiritual nature, to the mind, the seat of all happiness; to the soul, the surviving, essential principle of man, whose eternal state is to be determined by his temporal behaviour. But among those who are convinced that a trust in the world and its idols must be fallacious, many are resolved to rely on the dictates of their own reason. They exalt this power of the mind, to the rank of infallibility. They will understand and acknowledge nothing in religion, which they cannot submit to the decisions of reason. Of these men it may justly be said, that they *forsake the fountains of living water, and hew them out cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water.*

If reason were sufficient for man's happiness, why was revelation added? If reason were able to discover man's chief good, and the means of obtaining it, why did the heathens fail in their researches? Many among them are acknowledged to have possessed reason in singular perfection. Where is the Christian who can boast of this faculty superior to that of an Aristotle, or a Socrates? Yet, their reason, strong by nature, and confirmed by discipline, could not discover the important truths which Christianity reveals. Is every part of the Scriptures amenable to reason? What shall we say of the temptation of our Saviour, of the demoniacs, the gift of tongues, and all the miracles? If reason, mere human reason, is to determine on the credibility of these, she will haughtily reject it. She will perhaps reject the doctrine of the Trinity, of grace, of the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the mind of man;

and other doctrines essential in Christianity. She will, I fear, reject Christianity itself, if not in word, yet in deed; for Christianity, if not contrary to, is above, human reason, and cannot be *completely* understood or explained by its strongest exertions.

It is the pride of man which leads him to place an implicit confidence in his reason. He admires his own faculties too much; for, admirable as they are, they are yet found to be weak and fallible in almost every subject which they contemplate. How easily is the acutest man deceived in the ordinary commerce of life; and how foolish is it, upon difficult subjects, to confide entirely in a guide, who is often mislead by false lights, and prone to stumble even in the road of common sense?

But upon what can we rely, you will ask, if not upon our reason? I answer, upon revelation. Submit your reason in spiritual matters to the spiritual guidance of the gospel. Leave the dry and broken cisterns, and hasten to the fountain of living water.

But no; you will examine more closely, before you surrender that on which you plume yourself, as the sovereign judge of all things in heaven and on earth. You will read the modern sceptics, whom fame has introduced to your notice. You find some elegant writer, who has polished his language in the schools of the classics, and whose pages please your taste and imagination. He is one of those who idolizes his own intellectual abilities, scorns to think as his ancestors and his neighbours have thought, and boldly comes forward into the world, not only a professor, but a teacher, of infidelity. His fine style, his subtle arguments, his lively wit seduce you, charm you, and lead you into captivity. Adieu to him who was born in Bethlehem! you have found a teacher on the borders of Switzerland, among the

wits of France! You triumph in your choice, and think yourself superior to the dull mortals who contentedly travel in the beaten road of a national religion. Your taste is pleased, and your judgment bribed into the service of your inclination. In the day of health and prosperity, you may not perhaps discover, that the cisterns, to which you have recourse for water, are dry and broken: but suppose yourself reduced to adversity, sick, in prison, naked, hungry; which of the infidel wits and philosophers can afford you comfort under your sufferings, or teach you to bear them with the hope of a recompense in future? Which of them can afford you just reason to believe, that God will pour his spirit upon your heart, and give it that peace which the world cannot give? Alas! your gay and haughty guides have nothing for you in adversity. They would pass by you, like the unfeeling priest recorded in the Gospel. They courted fame, and adored the world, riches, honours, titles, rank, and power. Their books are formed to flatter men of the world, men who possess a great share of the world, and men who love the world and themselves with a short-sighted indeed, but, at the same time, an exclusive predilection.

As far as they, or their books, are concerned, you may live in misery, and die in despair. They have not a drop of water to refresh you, when you are faint and weary. Turn from them then with contempt, or rather with pity; and listen to the friendly voice, which says, *Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and I will refresh you.* Return from your tedious journey over deserts and sandy wilds, thirsty, forlorn wastes; turn to the green pastures, to cooling streams, to lands flowing with milk and honey. When you come to Christ from

the vanities of the world and human reason, you may exclaim with exultation, like the philosopher of antiquity, I have found! I have found! In traversing the ocean of life, man, like the mariner's bark, must have an anchor capable of holding him securely on the troubled waters, and that anchor is Jesus Christ.

The Gospel is the fountain of living water; a copious fountain which can never be exhausted, and the goodness of God invites all men to come and drink of it. What folly then in man to turn away from it, and to seek refreshment at the broken cistern!

Ye sheep, who have gone astray, who toil and weary yourselves in a barren and dry land, where no water is, or where the little you find will soon be dried up, listen to the voice of your friendly shepherd. Come into the fold while it is open to receive you. You may delay till the day is far spent, and darkness prevent your entrance.

But the preacher may cry aloud and spare not, while the busy crowd, engaged in the concerns of pleasure and fashionable amusement, cannot find time to lend an ear. "Our time," say they, "passes away smoothly in the midst of our avocations, and we choose not to be interrupted by the solemn addresses of the preacher. Gravity and solemnity would spread a cloud over the brightness of our horizon. They are most unfashionable in themselves, and they lead to all that is sad and gloomy."

Deplorable mistake! True religion is of a most cheerful and engaging aspect. She interrupts no innocent pleasure; on the contrary, she sweetens the temper, and gives a settled calmness and composure of spirits, most friendly to the pleasurable enjoyment of social intercourse. O taste the waters of this living fountain! They are not only sweet

themselves, but, like the delicious produce of the Indian cane, communicate an agreeable flavour to the whole beverage into which they are infused.

When one walks the streets of a great city, or enters the forum where merchants assemble, what grave and anxious countenances! and let the countenance speak, for it is an honest index to the heart. Does the countenance even of the rich, the honourable, the successful, express contentment and happiness? The wrinkles in the brow, and the furrows in the cheek, speak another language. Yet the men who exhibit them, plead in excuse for neglecting religion, that they are happy already in their possessions, and cannot sacrifice their enjoyments to the doctrines of the melancholy religionist. Their heart is with their treasure; but they will one day find, that a miser's chest is like the broken cistern in the text, incapable of affording comfort in the hour when riches shall appear of no more value than the dust out of which they were originally dug by the miner. One pious, one charitable action, will then be preferred to all the wealth which the most successful adventurer ever brought from Golconda or Peru.

But is merchandise to cease? Are amusements to be forbidden? Is philosophy to remain uncultivated? Are we to spend our time in useless indolence, in order to be pious? I have on a former occasion answered those questions, You are right, in pursuing the useful employments of civilized life, and in relaxing from your social labours by innocent amusements; only let them not engross your whole attention. Seek not that in them which you must ever seek in vain, your chief good. Acquiesce not in them; but look up to God, the giver of them, for the solid

happiness which alone can satisfy your craving heart, your aspiring nature.

And what is there that either he can bestow, or we expect, more than ease, abundance, health, and fame? Great blessings as these are, he has something in store infinitely more desirable. It is the emanation of himself; his holy spirit, a heavenly influence, streaming like the electrical fluid, invisible, yet pervading the inmost recesses, exalting our nature, and assimilating it with the divine: a living water of efficacy, to purify and exalt our hearts above all that men of the world are able to conceive. In poverty, it maketh rich indeed; and in riches it gives a sanctification, which renders riches the means of happiness to their possessor, and to all who are in the reach of his beneficence.

And what, you ask, is to be done, in order to secure this inestimable gift? I ask in return, Do you indeed desire it? are you as anxious, as earnest, as sincere in desiring it, as you were in the pursuit of worldly objects? If you are, fear not. The springs of the living water shall bubble up before you; even the rock in the wilderness shall gush with plenteous streams.

My understanding, you say, is convinced of the value of God's grace; but my affections are not yet warmed with a devout desire of obtaining it, and how shall I catch the pious flame? I answer, in the scriptural precept, *Pray without ceasing.* Never lie down on your pillow, nor rise from it, without a fervent prayer to him who has given you safety by day, and repose in the night season; to him in whom you live and move: nor go forth to your labour without a pious ejaculation.

You will thus, at some favourable moment, feel the delight of devotion. Your heart will be warmed

with that fervour, which will render prayer acceptable at the throne of mercy. All your thoughts and actions will be sanctified, the temple of the Holy Ghost will be prepared for his reception: and doubt not, but he will come in blessed influence from the Father, as light issues from the sun.

Though we are not sufficient of ourselves to do any thing, yet our sufficiency from God will enable us to do all that is necessary to salvation. *No man,* says our Saviour, *can come to me unless the Father draw him; and without me ye can do nothing.* *'Tis God,* says St. Paul, *that worketh in you to will and to do.*

With all humility then, yet with firm faith and aspiring hope, let us approach the holy Trinity, the living fountain of all knowledge, comfort, and happiness, henceforth fully resolved to forsake the broken cisterns, hewn out by our vanity and pride, which can hold no water. Pour down upon us, O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the refreshing streams of the waters of comfort; and grant that we may never forsake them to drink at our own scanty and fragile reservoirs! O give us the water and the bread of life, and grace to thirst and hunger after them, with more eagerness than after the food which perisheth! And grant that our spiritual life may be nourished by this heavenly food, till it shall have arrived at such a state of maturity, as shall induce thee to judge us worthy of being admitted to thy presence.

SERMON XV.

THE PRIDE OF HUMAN LEARNING AND FALSE PHILOSOPHY, A GREAT OBSTACLE TO THE RECEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

1 CORINTHIANS, iii. 18, 19, 20.—*Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.*
For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, he taketh the wise in their own craftiness.
And again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain.

THE purport of the passage which I have just recited, appears, on a superficial view, to militate against those profound acquisitions and polite accomplishments of human learning, after which the most generous and enlightened of the human race have esteemed it an honour to aspire. Unfortunate indeed is our condition, if, after all the labours of a comprehensive education, we have accumulated a load of learning, which serves but to augment our folly, and to render us less acceptable in the eye of our heavenly Father, than he whose situation, or whose culpable neglect, has retained him in a state of the grossest ignorance. If thus we are to interpret the passage, farewell all the sweets of knowledge, the sublime contemplations of truth, moral, physical, and religious; and welcome the narrowness, the rudeness, the barbarity of the savage.

But we learn, both from reason and from the Scriptures, to entertain worthier ideas of the Deity, than are compatible with the divine prohibition of human learning. He whose essence is spirit, cannot but be pleased with the improvements of his creatures in all spiritual excellence. We may rest

assured, that it is not learning, but the abuse, and the pride of learning, which appear thus contemptible in the sight of that omniscient Being, to whom all our improvements are but as the elementary acquisitions of childhood.

It is indeed a melancholy truth, that in many of the professors of learning, who have acquired a considerable share of that little which is given to man to know, the pride and the abuse of learning have been remarkably conspicuous. But it is at the same time true, that this, and all other Christian countries, can exhibit a much more numerous train of learned men, who have most illustriously displayed their talents and attainments in the service of mankind, and in the glory of the gospel. Philosophy has been taught to serve with an amiable humility at the altar of the Christian church, and learning has deemed herself most honoured, when she has been permitted to minister, as the handmaid of religion.

But since both learning and philosophy have too often rebelled against the authority, which ought always to controul them, and have erected themselves into judges and arbiters of that religion, to which they ought to be subservient, it becomes expedient to check their presumption, and obviate its consequences. The following remarks are therefore addressed to all those, who, in the course of their reading and reflection, involve themselves in such metaphysical, or other investigations, as allure them to an excessive admiration of their own powers, and to a contempt of the lovely, though simple system of Christian morality.

It is too evident to require demonstration, that a great number of scholars are prevented from forming an idea of Christianity, by an early and irrational prepossession against it. They have been used, in

the pursuit of polite learning, to the perusal of authors who have adorned their errors with the graces of an artificial style, and a glossy expression. They have felt the beauties of a Cicero, and a Xenophon; of a Plato, a Homer, and a Virgil. When they take up the New Testament, they find not those flowers, to the selection of which they had hitherto devoted their time and attention. Their classical taste is disgusted. They close the volume, or if they proceed with this prejudice against it, discover nothing in it but deformity. Inclined to doubt the authenticity of a book, which recommends not itself by those charms which they have usually admired, they eagerly peruse such authors as have exerted their ingenuity in exploding the revelation of Jesus Christ. In these they commonly discover those external graces which they love, but which are too often misapplied both in life and in learning.

They now no longer trouble themselves to investigate the original Scriptures. They have found a philosopher, as they are pleased to name him, who writes much more politely than the Evangelists and Apostles. They read, mark, and digest him. Their own studies take a predominant tinge from the channel in which they have flowed. From disciples of infidelity, they gradually become masters; and whether they give utterance to their opinions by conversation or by writing, they endeavour to inform their fellow-creatures in those truths, which they flatter themselves they have been so sagacious as to discover. But let them remember the prophecy of St. Peter, and tremble. There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, *even denying the Lord that bought them*, and *bring upon themselves swift destruction.*

To whatever eminence they arrive in the schools,

they still retain their original prepossession against the Christian religion. They cultivate the science of nature, and in the sublime discoveries of a Newton, they find many things which appear to be irreconcilable with the doctrines of Moses and Jesus Christ. They are immediately elevated in their own imaginations, and look down with contempt on all who willingly acquiesce in the scriptural history.

Thus every step in their progress is an advance to infidelity. Neither can it be said, that they adopt natural religion, as they discard revealed; for they are frequently found to be no less relaxed in their principles, than in their faith. Few have written against Christianity, who have not at the same time discovered symptoms of a corrupt heart, and a vicious inclination. It has indeed been said, with great appearance of probability, that men then only labour to explode Christianity, when their consciences inform them that they cannot endure the consequences of its truth. Recollect the most celebrated names among the patrons of infidelity, and you will discover, that they have at the same time been the patrons of immorality; so that when they relinquished the Christian, they in reality forsook all religion. But he who renounces natural religion, the evidences of which are no less luminous than the sun, can be a proficient in no other kind of wisdom, than that which is styled in Scripture, folly.

It is folly, it is vanity and wickedness, which leads the greater part of infidel writers to avow their singular opinions. They boast indeed of benevolence, and assert that their love of truth and regard for mankind, will not suffer them to withhold that light which their genius has discovered. But if they were really actuated by benevolence, they would suffer mankind to be happy, even in their mistake; for

they cannot but observe, that many derive the best and chief comfort of their lives from the belief of Christianity, and from the offices of religion. They would confine the discovery within their own bosoms. Their benevolence would place a watch over their words and writings, lest any doctrine should transpire subversive of the peace which soothes the bosom of their less enlightened neighbour. But the truth is, they pant for fame. They are uneasy, till they are distinguished. They have heard of many sceptical writers who are applauded as prodigies of wit, and sublime philosophers. They are flattered with the idea of becoming the leaders of a sect; and in order to arrive at that honour, either revive some antiquated objection, or invent a new one. They associate only with men of similar opinions, and read only writings of the same kind as their own; so that at last they seriously maintain those tenets, which they at first adopted without examination, and solely with a design to procure distinction. Their lives are usually uneasy, and such as must naturally be occasioned by bad principles and irrational conduct. Who can wonder that they are surrounded with clouds, when they have voluntarily extinguished HOPE, that bright luminary, which is able to irradiate the darkest scenes of human life? Who can wonder that the vessel is tossed from side to side, when they have voluntarily cut away the anchor?

Such wisdom is extreme folly: and I shall employ the remaining part of the Discourse; first, in dissuading scholars from incurring it; and secondly, in exhorting readers to avoid the books in which it notoriously abounds.

Whoever has devoted his life to letters, should resolve, to let the fruits of his studies redound to the happiness of mankind. Let it not be his first object

to gratify his own pride. If he is actuated by so mean a motive, he will soon affect singularity. He must oppose opinions already received. He must alarm by novelty. In the great multitude which compose the vulgar herd, he will scarcely fail of gaining proselytes; for no absurdity of doctrine was ever yet produced which did not find its patrons. Applause will lead him still farther in the path of error; and his own wretchedness will probably be aggravated by the efforts which he has diabolically made to lead others into sin and misery.

He should, at an early period of his progress, convince himself of the infirmity of the human understanding in its highest state of improvement. He should remember, that nature is so sparing in her gifts, that when she imparts a remarkable share of excellence in one kind, she usually leaves some defect in another. He who possesses a subtle understanding, capable of metaphysical research, may possibly be less susceptible of the warmer and social affections; less endowed with such sensibility as leads to religious devotion. He is therefore by no means a competent judge of subjects in which the religion of the multitude is interested. His lucubrations may be adapted to the taste of a few congenial students, who mix not in the concerns of vulgar life, and are unconnected by the endearing ties of fathers, husbands, and superintendants of families. But he enters not into the feelings of the majority of mankind; and indeed he possesses them not. This constitutes his defect. Happy it would be if he knew it, and presumed not to interpose in subjects addressed more immediately to such powers of perception as he possesses, only in a subordinate degree. But besides his natural defects, even the real excellence on which the student justly

prides himself, is subject to fluctuation. It has all that imperfection which characterises humanity, and which ought to prevent every man who is really wise, from pronouncing with absolute certainty on spiritual subjects of importance. The acutest sight sees but little, compared with that which it sees not.

It becomes every one therefore, whose wisdom is not folly, to entertain a diffidence of his abilities on things elevated above human reason: though fame may resound his praise, and though he is conscious that he has made great improvements, yet should he distrust his strength when he employs it in examining those religious systems in which mankind have agreed to think themselves greatly interested. Let him confidently contend with man, if necessary, but let him dread a conflict with the Almighty.

It is indeed observable, that the inferior pretenders to philosophy have been chiefly concerned in supporting the cause of infidelity. Of whom does this country boast herself in the philosophical department? To whom is she indebted, that all Europe honours her for the production of the greatest philosophers whom modern ages have seen. To Bacon, Newton, Locke. Yet these men were so far from disbelieving Christianity, or even entertaining doubts of it, that they not only conformed their private principles and actions to its precepts, but publicly defended it in their admirable writings. How solicitous was one of the finest authors and best wits and humourists of this country, to advance the progress, and display the beauties, of Christianity? I mean the excellent Addison; who, with every talent requisite for the gayer species of essays, never seemed to compose with so much alacrity, as when he was recommending the great duties of our holy religion.

That great abilities are modest, is well known to all who understand human nature. What wise man gives credit to bold pretenders, in any department? In medicine, they are ignorant empirics; in war, boastful cowards; in science, conceited sciolists. Experience will abundantly prove, that they who ostentatiously display their wisdom, are seldom so well qualified as those who confess themselves sensible of imperfection. We all remember the modesty of the wisest man among the heathens; who declared, that he knew nothing, while all around him were bestowing upon him the willing praise of unrivalled superiority. He paid a great respect to the religion of his country; and though he often expresses himself on the subject of a deity, like one who believed the existence of one God only, yet he attempts not to explode such popular errors, as were attended with no malignant influence on human happiness.

Let me then most earnestly exhort all who devote themselves to a life of learning, to fix their religious principles on an immovable basis, upon their first entrance. Let them also be fully convinced of the weakness of human nature, the small proficiency in knowledge which the wisest of men have made, and the necessity of a sincere and unaffected humility. Let them persuade themselves, at an early period, that those studies alone are worthy of a human creature, and productive of personal happiness, which aim at the accomplishment of benevolent purposes, which add to the comforts, alleviate the evils, of the present life, or give hope of immortality.

All, indeed, who devote themselves to the cultivation of philosophy, ought to have two ends in view; the improvement of themselves, and the advancement of general felicity. Poor and despicable are

the pursuits of him, who seeks no other end in his literary pursuits, but the gratification of curiosity, the acquisition of fame, and the promotion of his temporal interest. The world abounds with ignorance; and from ignorance, proceeds much of that wickedness and misery, which are found to deform and degrade human nature, and to poison all human enjoyment.

The lot of that man is happy and honourable, who is enabled, by his successful studies, to hold out a lamp to cheer the gloom, and to direct the steps of the benighted traveller in the journey of life. When intellectual improvements are thus directed, they exalt the character of their possessor to the highest glory. He becomes a blessing to his generation. He is truly godlike, and there is every reason to entertain a hope, that he is the favourite of that God, whom, at an awful distance, he endeavours to resemble.

But how unlike is the condition of the atheistical writer, or unbelieving philosopher! He has employed the faculties of mind, which God Almighty gave him, in an impious endeavour to exterminate religion. He has performed the business of that evil spirit, who is represented as taking delight in the diffusion of misery. He has fought under the banners of Satan against the most high God; and what can we expect as his doom, but that he should be condemned to the realms of that potentate, whose part he has taken, whose cause he has promoted?

Can the admiration of a few mortals counterbalance the danger of incurring the everlasting displeasure of the Lord of heaven and earth; of him, who is able to annihilate him in a moment, or to condemn him to unutterable and unceasing torment? But he believes not in such a God, and he fears not

the danger. He may, indeed, proceed, during the hours of health and prosperity, in the career of wickedness; but the day will come, when, in the anguish of his heart, he will wish to recal those words, and those writings, which are now irrevocable. If he feel no such remorse on his death-bed, or in the hour of sickness and pain, then is his case still more deplorable. Then is there every reason to fear, that he is utterly abandoned by grace, and given over to the evil one.

And now, after having remonstrated with scholars and writers, on the folly of such wisdom as leads them to patronise infidelity, it remains to admonish readers of the danger of bestowing attention on writings, however celebrated, however replete with wit and ingenuity, which are intended to ridicule and revile the religion of Jesus Christ.

Very few readers in the common classes of mankind, are able to discover the fallacy of subtle argument. They take up a sceptical book, because the name of the author is celebrated. They find that he is an unbeliever, and supports his unbelief with apparent ingenuity. They understand the author but partially; but they give him credit, where they do not understand, for sound and conclusive argumentation. The authority of a name renowned throughout the countries of Europe, carries them away captive. They are desirous of enjoying the reputation of wits and philosophers, in the little circle of their companions; and therefore eagerly adopt the writer's opinions, after the most superficial examination. Their practices must keep pace with their principles, and thus are they rashly involved in speculative irreligion and practical immorality.

Let then the generality of mankind, those in the

middle ranks, whose education has not been such as may enable them to refute errors in philosophy, resolve to take the safest side, and to avoid, as they would the contagion of a pestilence, the perusal of seducing books, written to weaken their belief in the religion of their country. There are books enough in every department of letters, to amuse and instruct an ingenuous mind, without having recourse to the productions of self-conceited unbelievers.

Neither should the man of cultivated understanding, the professed scholar, devote his time and attention to such writings. However celebrated they may be, it is no disgraceful, but an honourable, defect, to be unacquainted with them. There is danger in perusing them. Wit, and polished language, will disguise the poison of sophistry. The reader means only to indulge an innocent curiosity, but is at last caught in a snare, from which it is not easy to escape. Wickedness of all kinds is of an encroaching nature. It may be justly attributed, either to the natural corruption of human nature, or the operation of evil spirits, that he who has once trodden in the path that leads to destruction, cannot withdraw himself without great difficulty. Many a student has dated all his subsequent misery, from the hour in which he carelessly took up the volume of some fashionable infidel. It is safest, not to inspect such books at all; but common prudence directs, that we suspend the indulgence of our curiosity, till our principles are fixed, and our judgments mature. It happens perversely, that young men, who are least qualified to detect deceit, are the most inclined to study those writings in which it chiefly abounds. They are recommended by fashion, by novelty, by wit; and almost every one is of opinion, that he has self-command enough,

to avoid the danger by which others might be undone.

There are certain homely virtues, which refined and speculative philosophy seldom mentions; the practice of which, is essentially necessary to our comfort. Such are, common honesty, probity, and a mutual interchange of good offices in ordinary life. Such are, sobriety and industry. Such are, an humble acquiescence in our lot, and a ready obedience to legal ordinances, established for the general good. These, it is our interest, as well as our duty, constantly to observe. However we may amuse ourselves in speculation, let us never be tempted to leave the high road of obvious duty, plainly dictated by the common-sense of mankind. Let retired students ingeniously deny the difference between good and evil. Such an employment of their faculties may fill up those hours which might otherwise be engaged in active vice. But let us rather believe the suggestion of our senses and our understandings, which, when they are not perverted or misled, point out the difference between good and evil as plainly as that between light and darkness. Let us be humble, as becomes such frail and wretched creatures as ourselves. Let us retain the simplicity of heart which our Saviour so warmly approved, and which is the best soil for the growth of every virtue. Let us dare to follow the footsteps of our pious ancestors, who, in all godly honesty, obeyed the dictates of their consciences, and the precepts of the Scriptures; and, after their pilgrimage, laid down their heads in peace, and with a comfortable hope of a joyful resurrection. The books in which they delighted, were their Bibles and their Prayer-books. Their philosophy was, to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their

God; and, though they were fools in the opinion of the scorner, they were wise unto salvation. Therefore, if any of you lack WISDOM, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him: *but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.*

SERMON XVI.

ON THE DUTY OF SERVANTS.

PSALM ci. 9, 10.—*Whoso leadeth a godly life, he shall be my servant. There shall no deceitful person dwell in my house. He that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight.*

IF we consider these words as the words of a king, declaring his resolution to choose no ministers of his government, but those whose characters are distinguished for piety and probity, they will afford instruction of a most valuable kind to all who sit upon thrones. Happy indeed would it be, if those who are exalted to honourable offices of state, were elevated, because they were eminent examples of all moral virtue. They are too often forced into offices, by their own restless ambition, and the furious zeal of deluded parties; or, when they are chosen, it too often happens, that ability, and not virtue, determines the choice.

It would be a most effectual mode of preaching to a whole nation, if princes would adopt the resolutions of the text, and exalt none to high honours and great power, who were not as conspicuous for exemplary piety and goodness of heart, as for intellectual abilities and political influence. A virtuous court

would produce a virtuous people. But when men, whose conduct, and even professions, furnish reason to conclude that they disbelieve the national religion, are raised to the rank of nobles, counsellors of princes, and disposers of preferment, religious as well as civil, the people will naturally suppose, that those who appoint them, neither fear God, nor believe in Christ; and that all religion is but the invention of knaves to awe fools. Such an opinion, founded on such appearances, will militate more powerfully against Christianity, among the people at large, than all the arguments of the infidel, all the derision of the profligate. The people do indeed reason wrong in this case; but since they will reason so, and conduct themselves accordingly, governors should not act in such a manner as to cause and continue their error.

But, I do not at present intend to consider the text, as describing either the ministers of church or state. I shall understand the words in their literal sense, and endeavour to derive from them some instruction, for a very great and very valuable part of the human race; those who are placed by Providence in the humble state of menial servitude.

The state of human affairs, as instituted by Providence, evidently requires a regular subordination. Some must govern, and others must of necessity be subject to their government. Some must employ the faculties of their minds, in ordering and regulating schemes for the general benefit; and others must exercise their bodies in manual labour, and conform their wills to the direction of lawful and expedient superintendants. If all men attempted to establish the equality of all, they would contend against God and nature; and the contest must proceed, by bloodshed, to universal destruction.

A very numerous rank of human creatures appear

in the world to act the humble part of executing the commands, and performing the work, of other men. In all ages of the world, and in every part of the globe, the distinction of masters and servants has been observed: But let it be duly attended to, that before that happy period when Jesus Christ came in the form of a servant, servitude was slavery. Servants among the heathens differed very little from beasts of burthen, but in the external figure. This was among the many abominations of the heathens, and evinced into what deplorable errors whole nations may fall, when enlightened only by the glimmering lamp of that reason, of which man so proudly boasts, as his best distinction.

Jesus Christ came to preach the gospel to the poor; he was sent to heal the broken-hearted, *to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised.*

It appears to me from this passage, that the abolition of slavery was one of the principal purposes of our Saviour's gracious mission. They who lived and died in slavery, and left the bitter inheritance to their children and their children's children, were now to be set at liberty, enabled to enjoy the fruits of their labour, and to rise in the ranks of society, in consequence of their merits and their exertions. From this time no particular race was doomed to servitude. All might, in their turn, be reduced to it by misfortune; and all might escape it, by successful industry.

Servitude indeed (for slavery existed no longer) became voluntary, and the compact between master and servant was attended with conditions equally advantageous to both. It began and terminated according to agreement. No personal ill-treatment

was to be tolerated. The law was open to all; and servants were as much under its protection as the most powerful and wealthy lords.

Servitude in a good family, and in its present state, is comparatively a happy condition. The wants of nature are supplied without expense, and without solicitude. The master labours, and leads an anxious life, to secure plenty and ease to the domestics. Nothing of that hard labour, which might be esteemed unreasonable or grievous, is usually exacted. And indeed it is obvious to remark, that few persons who live in their own houses, and support themselves by labour, enjoy so comfortable a situation, as that of domestic servants in well-disposed families. Exempted from the common cares of life, they have time to consider, and perform their duties; both those which immediately belong to their office, and those which, as human creatures, they owe to man and God.

I argue then; that, since servants are under such particular obligations to the Christian religion, and possess a state of freedom from the many cares of those who have to provide for a household, they are peculiarly bound to the regular performance of their religious and social duties.

Every good and wise master will be inclined to say with David in the text, *Whoso leadeth a godly life, he shall be my servant. There shall no deceitful person dwell in my house. He that telleth lies, shall not dwell in my sight.*

The first requisite in a good servant is, that he lead a godly life. A due sense of religion, or the fear of God, will be to him, as indeed to all men, the beginning of wisdom. All real virtues and good qualities must flow from religion, rightly understood.

And here I cannot but lament, that, in some dis-

tinguished families, the domestic servants appear to be Christians only in name. Sunday is too little regarded by many, who are proud of being distinguished by trifles, and even by vice and impiety, as fashionable people. The ministers of their luxury look up to them as models of behaviour; and if they can vie with them in none of the good qualities which they may have, aspire after an equality in vice and impiety. It is customary, in such families, to spend the Lord's day in peculiar dissipation; and the servants are often prevented, even if they were desirous, from performing the religious duties which their own consciences, and the laws of their church and their country require.

If the heads of families have neither time nor inclination (which they ought to have) to teach their servants the doctrines and duties of religion, they ought not only to permit them to attend, but to require their attendance on the public worship of God, and at the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

How heinous must be the offence of them, who, not content with neglecting those religious ordinances which conduce to the preservation of good order and virtue, exercise that authority which their situation gives them, in preventing their dependants from the performance of duties in which they would otherwise delight; who force them from God, to employ them in luxury?

There is no less imprudence, than impiety and injustice, in such conduct. For nothing will so effectually make a servant really valuable and useful, as sincere religion. Hypocrisy is indeed a cloak for every fraudulent practice, but sincere religion cannot but produce good behaviour. And the master who is so happy as to infuse religious principles, either by precept or example, will probably receive

a reward for his endeavours in this world, as well as in a better.

I proceed to point out, and recommend, the peculiar virtues which become a servant. The text specifies religion, as the very first requisite. *Whoso leadeth a godly life, he shall be my servant,* says David; and he proceeds thus: *There shall no deceitful person dwell in my house. He that telleth lies, shall not dwell in my sight.*

It appears, by this passage, that truth and moral honesty are the foundation of the social virtues, which more particularly adorn a state of servitude. David spoke like one who was well acquainted with real life, and who drew his observations from actual experience.

Every one knows, that servants are usually ready to conceal their faults of omission or commission, by evasion or denial; that they are apt to create misery in families, by fabricating tales to their disadvantage; that they are often inclined to exaggerate the foibles of their superiors, in revenge for a just reprimand; to disclose secrets, and to give them an unfavourable colour, by adding or concealing some momentous circumstance. The opportunities they possess of animadverting on the manners and character of those who support them, render them particularly dangerous when they are disposed to misrepresentation, which unfortunately is but too often the case. The heathen poet observed with justice, that the tongue is the worst part of a bad servant.

Falsehood is a great sin in all men; for *lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.* But servants are confided in with singular reliance; and their lies and calumnies against their employers are for that reason singularly base.

They should habituate themselves to consider

their masters as their friends and protectors, to whom they owe truth and fidelity as a just return for the benefits they enjoy; and they must never suppose that their low situation exempts them from the necessity of reverencing that truth in word and deed, which their masters are obliged by the laws of religion and honour to observe. They have been called the humble friends of those who employ them, and like friends, should endeavour to extenuate, as far as truth will allow, rather than aggravate, the foibles and errors of those under whose roof they enjoy plenty and peace.

With respect to the concealment of their faults by a lie, it is obvious to remark, that this is to add one sin to another; and that though they should escape the notice and punishment of an earthly master, they will incur the displeasure of a heavenly one; who, perhaps, might not have been extreme to mark what was done amiss in the first offence.

And with respect to the other source of lies, a love of tale-bearing, and a wish to revenge themselves on their superiors, by diffusing scandal, it is an aggravated offence. Calumny and detraction are universally reprobated, as practices odious in themselves, and destructive of society. But in a servant against a master, they become crimes of such an atrocious nature, that a name adequate to their malignity is not yet invented. They are a complication of ingratitude, treachery, cruelty, and dishonesty. Families lie at the mercy of servants with respect to their good name, more than their property; and thousands have been defamed, so as to have been miserable in themselves, and injured in their fortunes, by the false tongue of an unprincipled servant.

From a love of truth, and conscientious adherence

to it, will arise such a sense of duty and propriety, as will guide a servant in the performance of all that is required from him, both as a man, and as one who is placed in a subordinate rank of society.

But the love of truth will more immediately display itself in the preservation of honesty. Servants are exposed to particular temptations to theft. It is extremely easy to secrete many valuable articles of property, which their masters may not immediately notice, or which they may suppose either to be lost, or stolen by others. This facility operates as a snare. Many, who would never have brought themselves to rob on the highway, or break into a house, have suffered themselves to be tempted to little petty tricks, and secret acts of dishonesty, not at all less criminal in the eye of heaven than open robbery. They have indeed often led to it, for the mind is easily allured from small to great acts of villainy.

Let the good servant then be upon his guard, and not take any advantages which are not fair and allowable, though he knows that he might escape detection. As his situation is exposed to great temptations, he will, if he has a due sense of the value of his soul, take particular precautions; *not purloining, but showing all fidelity.*

A ready obedience to the commands of their masters, is a duty indispensable: *To whom we yield ourselves servants to obey, his servants we are whom we obey.** He who refuses to obey the lawful commands of his master, does in fact deny the relation between master and servant. He acts absurdly in the eye of reason, culpably in the eye of man, and rebelliously in the eye of God. There are few commands more expressly given, than that which requires

* Rom. vi. 16.

obedience to masters. *Servants, obey in all things your masters; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God; knowing, that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance.* Thus it appears, that the Apostle enjoins obedience to masters on religious principles, and proposes a particular reward as an inducement. *Ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance;* that is, ye shall become the children of God, and be heirs of salvation, together with good men, whom God has adopted into his family. *There is reserved in heaven for you, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Look for your reward from your master in heaven; not as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will, doing service as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing, that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same he shall receive of the Lord.*

How valuable and respectable a member of society is he, however low his situation in it, who performs his duty to man from the fear of God! *He is humbled now, but he shall hereafter be exalted: for there is no respect of persons with God. He is Lord over all.*

The bad behaviour of a master will not tempt a good servant to improper disobedience; for the Scripture thus teaches him: *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience sake, endure grief, suffering wrongfully.* The good servant will, indeed, have many opportunities of exercising patience, as well as all other virtues; and while he takes no offence, let him be careful to give none.

Respect, indeed, will be due from him to his master, according to the law of nature and good order;

for inferiors should reverence their superiors in rank, so far as to pay them that submission, which civility and decorum, as well as the existence of a well regulated society, require; and real respect will conduce greatly to secure a ready obedience. The Apostle therefore, among other excellent advice to servants, directs them, to *please their own masters well in all things, not answering again. The eyes of the servants look unto the hands of their masters; and the eyes of a maiden, unto the hands of her mistress.*

In this free country, and in the state of liberty which the lowest ranks enjoy, it sometimes happens, that abuse and ill-language are used by servants towards those who protect them, and whose rank and virtue demand respect. But this behaviour is not only indecent and unreasonable, but strictly forbidden by the holy Scriptures. Railing and reviling are unlawful in any Christian; servants are commanded not to answer again, but to hear and bear reproof with patience and resignation, even if it is unjust; and if it is just, they are to receive it with great thankfulness, and to reform the errors which occasioned it.

I need not spend many words in convincing you, that diligence is a prime virtue in a good servant. To consume that time in idleness, which should be spent in promoting the purposes of an employer, is to be guilty of robbery. The time of a servant, within the limits of reasonable hours, belongs to the master. He has purchased it, and perhaps paid for it dearly. It is his right and property, no less than his estate. How guilty are many, who conceive themselves to be perfectly innocent! I mean those, who resolve not to exert themselves for another, but to enjoy ease and security, without making any return, though

an equivalent is expected, and implied in the original engagement.

If they are not guilty of lying, fraud, or ill-language, they conclude that all is well; not considering, that they owe a debt of services to their masters, which, if they neglect to pay, by voluntary omission, they are to be numbered among the unjust; and are worthy to receive the punishment due to unprofitable servants.

That temperance and sobriety are virtues particularly requisite in servants, will be readily admitted. For how can they be fit to obey the commands of others, who render themselves incapable of governing themselves? A thousand evils arise in families, from the intemperance of servants. No servant is without some trust or confidence reposed; but how shall he be vigilant or faithful, even if his principles incline him, whose eyes and ears and memory are destroyed, or weakened by drunkenness and gluttony? It is necessary to be sober, in order to be vigilant; which is the reason why sobriety and vigilance are conjointly recommended in the holy Scriptures.

I will not trespass on your patience so far, as to go through the whole circle of moral virtues, in pointing out the duty of servants. The text more particularly recommends a strict regard to truth; and I repeat, that from a strict regard to truth every other virtue characteristic of a good servant and a good man will be likely to arise.

And now let me entreat those in this useful class of mankind, who may now happen to hear me, not to suppose, that we recommend those virtues to them for our own sakes only. It is indeed true, that a good servant contributes greatly to the comfort of life, and that every wise master wishes for his own sake, that his servant should be well-principled in

morality and religion. But believe me, ye to whom this advice is more particularly addressed, your own happiness is more concerned, than that of your masters can possibly be. Your services can contribute only to their interest or accommodation in this world, and during the short period of this life; but your own virtues will recommend you to the favour of him, one day in whose courts is better than a thousand; will secure you a mansion of bliss, from which no caprice or evil accident can exclude you.

And I must add, that your good behaviour will be likely to promote your interest in this world, more than any art or cunning on which you may value yourselves; for since all wise masters esteem good servants so highly as they evidently do, there is no doubt but that he who can approve himself a good servant will be encouraged, rewarded, and promoted in life. The prosperity and advancement of servants are certainly, for the most part, according to the characters they fix by their behaviour. A really good and faithful servant is indeed a most respectable person, a most valuable member of the community; and they who do not endeavour to advance such a one from a low estate to a comfortable competency, or to render his burthen easy in service, deserve not the blessing which they enjoy.

But imagine not, that, in the relations of master and servants, we mean to insinuate, that there are more duties incumbent on servants than on masters. By no means. Masters are under strict obligations to treat their servants kindly and justly, and to promote both their temporal and spiritual interest; but it must be allowed, that masters, from the opportunities of a better education, from reading and various other sources of knowledge, are generally

better acquainted with their duty than servants. Happy are they if they act according to their better knowledge. As much is given to them, much will be required.

I have devoted these few hints of advice to servants, with a sincere desire to promote their eternal happiness, as well as their present; and it appeared to me, that discourses have not been sufficiently often addressed, in particular, to persons in this low, but useful order. But if Christ came to preach the gospel to the poor, surely it behoves his ministers to imitate his amiable condescension.

Indeed, it behoves us all to consider, that the distinctions of rank are but of short duration. Death will soon level the high with the low. He who is clothed in purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day, shall soon wear a shroud, and lie down in the earth, no less a prey to corruption, than he who, in the livery of servitude, was but the humble minister of another's pride and luxury. Let us then make it our chief care to behave well to each other during the short time of this mortal life, remembering, that high and low, rich and poor, meet together; the Lord is the maker of them.

It is not for us to describe the particulars of the heavenly state; but there is reason to believe (as we are told by our Saviour, that in his Father's house there are many mansions,) some superior degree of honour will await those who are distinguished by superior degrees of holiness in this life; so that while bad masters may be degraded to low degrees, good servants may be exalted, according to that rule, the *first shall be last, and the last first.*

I will conclude, with exhorting those who are servants of men, to remember, that they ought to be, at the same time, the servants of God; and to

take care, that they are not the servants of sin, *for the wages of sin is death.*

SERMON XVII.

ON THE WICKEDNESS AND MISERY OF ENVY AND CONTENTION.

JAMES, iii. 16.—*For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.*

THE world was originally created in great beauty and order; but the disobedience of its inhabitants soon introduced that deformity and irregularity which every thinking mortal cannot but see and deplore.

The natural state of things underwent a sad alteration for the worse at the fall of man, and so also did the moral and intellectual. The heart, which was formed by its benevolent Maker for every tender sentiment, for love and humanity, became hardened to insensibility, or alive to the malignant passions of envy, hatred, and revenge.

Man, in his fallen state, was to be his own tormentor, and the instrument of his own punishment. For this purpose his heart was opened to the entrance of pride and malice, which consistently with their evil nature, sting the bosom in which they are most warmly cherished.

I dwell not on the common topic, that envy tortures the bosom in which it is harboured, because it is universally acknowledged; and those who are under the influence of the passion, have felt a conviction of this truth more forcibly, than the most persuasive language of the orator or philosopher have ever been able to inculcate it. I mean rather to consider envy and strife, as they tend, according to the text, to produce confusion and every evil work in society.

I shall review their effects in private families, in the intercourse of a neighbourhood, in government, in the church, on whole nations, and on the eternal welfare of those who are habitually and incorrigibly under their malignant influence.

There is not perhaps, under the canopy of heaven, a more lovely sight, nor a happier state, than that of whole families connected by the bands of love, no less than of consanguinity, living together in unity. The happiness of every individual is augmented by mutual participation. The warmth of the nest is reverberated and increased. The sincerity of their endeavours to please and accommodate each other, gives an additional value to every enjoyment, and to every convenience resulting from the happy association. Angels might stoop down from heaven, to behold that charming picture, a virtuous and a happy family.

But if the advantages of family union are great, the evils of disunion are of equal magnitude. From the unnatural animosities of parent and child, of husband and wife, it cannot be supposed but that misery of a peculiar and aggravated kind must originate. A separation usually takes place; for life cannot be borne amidst briars and thorns; and the offspring which still wants the support of parental protection, is extruded from the warm and safe nest into the wide world, without one faithful guide; the parent is deserted by those from whom he had every reason to expect comfort, and his grey hairs are brought with sorrow to the grave; or else the pair who have mutually vowed fidelity for life, and brought an offspring into the world, are driven from each other, in violation of the most solemn engagements, compelled by their passions to drag an uncomfortable life in solitude, and exposed to all the

temptations of involuntary celibacy. Confusion indeed, and every evil work, as the Apostle justly observes, are the natural consequences of violent and exasperated contention. I have indeed remarked, that many have plunged themselves into excess, riot, and debauchery, either to avoid and forget the miseries they experienced under their domestic roof; or from the want of an asylum from the wicked, in their parents' habitation.

There is indeed no doubt, but that the evil spirit, who goeth about seeking whom he may destroy, takes the opportunity of entering into those families from which natural affection is excluded. He fills their hearts not only with hatred and malevolence, but with those other evil propensities which are found to accompany the uncharitable sins. All kinds of wickedness and misery have proceeded from family dissension; and I recommend it to all who are anxious for the preservation of their innocence as well as peace, to cultivate the mild affections and gentle virtues, which lead to the establishment and continuance of domestic union.

To avoid the irritation of temper which arises from trifling causes, but produces serious effects, one of the best rules which can be given is, that every member of the family should pay a reciprocal respect; not indeed by a formal and reserved behaviour, for that, I believe, is incompatible with sincerity and affection, but a polite deference, derived from sentiments of real esteem and Christian love. Whereas, unfortunately, the civilities of many families are reserved for the visitor and the stranger.

But, indeed, it will operate as a more powerful motive to the duty of seeking family peace and ensuing it, if we consider that God has, in a peculiar manner, required it of those who are his faithful

servants. *Honour thy father and mother*, is among the express commandments which came from the mouth of God on Mount Sinai; and love and charity are so strongly and constantly required in the gospel, that there can be no doubt but that the violation of them in the family circle, where reason as well as religion more particularly enjoins them, must be a sin of no inconsiderable malignity. They cannot pretend to love mankind at large, and strangers, whom they have not seen, and to whom they owe no particular favours, who hate and despise the persons to whom they are indebted for their being under God, and for all the comforts and conveniencies of it.

Ye fathers, children, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, who have been hitherto so imprudent and wicked as to live in the world without natural affection, without endeavouring to bear each other's burthens, and to increase each other's ease and comforts; turn from the error of your ways, from the thorny and rough road of strife and hatred, to the flowery path of love! Thus shall you preserve each other from many sins; thus shall you increase all the comforts of life; thus shall you sweeten many of its bitter ingredients; thus shall you please the Father of us all, who intended that the great family of mankind should all be bound together in the cords of love, as dear children of one almighty and all-merciful Parent, in every age and every clime. Consider how short is life, and that when a dear relative is laid in the grave, how we shall wish, in the anguish of our hearts, that we had made our peace with him before he went hence, and was no more seen! Agree with him therefore quickly, lest death interpose and render that enmity, which arose perhaps from the transient impulse of pride and passion, eternal! O heal the wounds that rankle in your heart,

by pouring in the oil and balsam of true Christian benevolence!

I have not considered *envy* as affecting the peace of private families, because I believe it seldom operates in that confined sphere; but *strife* is too commonly found in them, and happy should I be, if any thing which I advance could lessen its pernicious influence, and strengthen the silken cords of domestic love.

But I proceed to the consideration of another scene of human affairs, in which both envy and strife are equally conspicuous and injurious; I mean, in the intercourse of neighbourhood.

Such is the present constitution of things, that there cannot be an equality of conditions in the world; that some will be rising in life, while others fall, or continue stationary.

There is something which has the appearance of chance in all things; though it is in fact the secret operation of divine Providence. Whatever be the cause, it is certain, that it is not possible to find a neighbourhood where all are on a level with respect to the advantages of external fortune. Unhappily, he who rises above the level, becomes a mark for the shafts of envy. No pains are spared which can tend to reduce him to the situation of the enviers. Few men are so spotless in their characters, as not to afford some scope for evil report among those who examine their actions and characters with the searching and unwinking eye of envy. Their real faults will be exaggerated beyond all bounds, and invention will be active in adding a long catalogue which have no foundation in truth. Calumnies will be industriously spread in the dark, till all friendship and communication with the envied objects are utterly rescinded. The angry passions are inflamed, between those who

ought to afford mutual respect and assistance, situated, as they are, by Providence in the vicinity of each other, and enabled to contribute to mutual comfort during their passage through this turbulent world.

But I forbear to enlarge on the subject of envy as a topic of morality, because it has been treated by all moralists, since men began to consider actions in a philosophical light; and it is difficult, as well as unnecessary, to add any observations upon it, recommended by the grace of novelty. Viewing it as a Christian, rather than a moralist, I believe it will appear peculiarly atrocious, and most repugnant to that merciful system of religion which was introduced into the world by Jesus Christ.

The natural or unregenerate man is a compound of envy, hatred, and malice, the very qualities of the evil one; and it was the grand purpose of the Gospel to change this diabolical disposition to the angelic state of love and charity. He who professes the Gospel of Christ, and is at the same time under the influence of those malevolent affections, can have no just reasons to suppose that his professions are sincere, or that the external actions of religion, which he performs from custom or a regard to decency, will be accepted.

No man can be envious without knowing it; for envy is universally acknowledged to be a most painful passion. Let every one, therefore, who feels this viper gnawing at his heart, immediately consider the dangerous, as well as tormenting state in which he is involved. Let him consider, that his envy is an infallible symptom of his want of grace; an indubitable proof of his not being a member of Christ, and a child of God. Envy and sincere Christianity are incompatible.

How many are there, notwithstanding the evidence of these most important truths, who attend constantly at the church, and are decent in all religious offices, who, at the very same time, are in the gall of bitterness, and, as the Scriptures very strongly express their unhappy state, children of the devil.

Christianity teaches to rejoice with them that rejoice; but how can he obey this precept, to whom the joy of another is an occasion of sorrow; the sorrow of another, an occasion of joy? Behold him all pale and ghastly, gnashing his teeth in some dark corner, while the voice of joy and health is singing the carols of innocence in the house of the prosperous. Can God Almighty look down from heaven, and behold the selfish wretch with complacency? Certainly not, for God is a God of love and mercy. But the devil must rejoice at the sight, and glory in beholding a proselyte, and a child of his own, so similar to himself in the deformity of his disposition.

Envy naturally produces strife. The bitterness of the passion vents itself in reproachful language and unkind behaviour. Parties are formed who defend what others attack, and the whole neighbourhood is involved in a state of war from the malice of a few individuals. I do not enlarge on the unhappiness of such a state, because all who are in it must acknowledge, that there are few conditions and situations more uncomfortable. I consider it rather as affecting our future happiness than the present, as displeasing to God, and as rendering us incapable of receiving the benefits of Christ's redemption. It alienates the heart from God as much as from man.

On this topic it is evident that few arguments are necessary; for no truth of Christianity is more universally known, than that which teaches men, that love, mercy, benevolence, and charity, are the virtues

which are best able to recommend us to the favour of God, and to cover the multitude of sins which our wickedness and presumption lead the very best among us to commit. Who has not heard that our Saviour came into the world to teach men a new commandment, the great law of universal love? *A new commandment I give you, that you love one another.* It was indeed a new commandment; for in the times of heathenism, which God winked at, it was unknown, or known so imperfectly as to be little observed. Envy, and revenge, and strife, if they were conducted with spirit, constituted a heathen hero. But to forgive and forget offences argues a greater soul, and to the honour of Christianity is one of her sublime doctrines.

I am afraid that moral precepts will contribute little to the banishment of envy, hatred, and malice; for none had finer moral precepts than the heathens, who yet gloried in some practices which arose from extreme malevolence.

I therefore conclude, that nothing can effectually reform the heart of man but the grace of God; that nothing can soften its obduracy, nor sweeten its acrimony, but the all-powerful influence of the Christian religion, the vital streams of grace from heaven melting the heart of hardened unregenerate man. It is necessary that a new creation should take place in us, before we can entirely overcome the malignant propensities of man in a state of nature. And how is this to be effected? By faith in Jesus Christ, by prayer, and by earnest endeavours to attain perfection. Every effort which it is in our power to make, by the help of our own reason, must be made, and the deficiencies will be supplied by God's grace, by the emanation of the Holy Spirit.

There is, however, an irritability of temper in

many, which causes them to be involved in dissensions, without any deliberate intention to give or to take offence. Habitual indulgence often gives such strength to this disposition, that it is found to destroy the happiness of the person who is under its influence, and of all around him. Nothing but persevering endeavours to correct this unfortunate temper, can prevent its diffusing extreme misery. Whoever is possessed of it will, as he values his own ease and the tranquillity of all who have any connection with him, be constantly on his guard to restrain the very first tendency to anger. By habit he will find himself enabled to subdue this very painful passion, and instead of journeying through life in a path full of thistles, thorns, and briars, he will walk in smooth and flowery ways. But though the irritability which I mean to describe, arises not from malevolence of heart, and therefore is less culpable than real malice, yet it is liable to the displeasure of God when indulged; and I cannot help thinking, that God will lend his gracious ear to the man who sincerely endeavours to restrain its excesses. I must recommend prayer therefore, as one of the most efficacious means of correcting the evils of an irritable temper.

It is too obvious to require proof or illustration, that pride, vanity, arrogance, self-conceit, ostentation, have an immediate tendency to destroy the comforts of a good neighbourhood, and are on that account, as well as in their own nature, greatly displeasing to God, at the same time that they are a nuisance to society.

But I proceed to another topic which the text suggests to my consideration. *Where envying and strife is,* says the Apostle, *there is confusion and every evil work.* Confusion in public affairs is re-

markably the consequence of the malevolent passions. Our own country, and indeed all free countries, in which there was a licence of speech or of writing, have exhibited melancholy proofs of the ill effects attending a spirit of contention. Riot, tumult, and disorder, have been excited by the virulence of opposing parties; who, though each pretended to a remarkable love of their country, have contributed more than any foreign foe, or real calamity, to destroy its prosperity.

Such, indeed, is the violence of political animosity, that every social and Christian duty is sacrificed to the indulgence of it. Hatred of the most bitter kind is occasioned by a difference of opinion in politics, or by an attachment to a favourite statesman, or system of public conduct. And it is greatly to be lamented, that this violence of zeal arises not from the pure motives of genuine patriotism, to which it arrogantly pretends, but from envy; from a contentious temper, from vanity, from ambition.

I most earnestly admonish all who are instigated by these motives to seditious language, writing, or action, to consider that they are insulting the King of kings; who delights in order and tranquillity, and whose gracious Gospel particularly requires a peaceful submission to the laws of a country, and to the powers legally established. Confusion and every evil work are the consequence of the unruly passions of envy and strife, when they direct their force against the civil government and its proper administrators. "*Fear God, and honour the king,*" are commands joined together in the Scriptures so closely, as to induce one to conclude, that to honour the king, is to perform a duty, at least approaching to the nature of a religious office. But if this should not be allowed, yet it is certainly true, that to dis-

turb good government, is contrary to the duty of a good man, and particularly inconsistent with the character of a good Christian; who should study to be quiet, and to mind his own business, and not follow those who, from envy and strife, are given to change, or unnecessary innovation.

But the evil spirit of contention is too common in a department which ought to exhibit exemplary instances of peace and unity; I mean, in the discussion of religious doctrines, and in ecclesiastical controversy. I would not be understood to dissuade from inquiry. It is the duty and delight of every rational mind, to employ itself in the investigation of important truth. But I wish the conviction to become universal, that charity is of far more consequence than knowledge, and that there are few speculative points so really interesting as to justify the violation of charity in their discussion.

It is indeed greatly to be feared, that religious controversialists are often under the influence of pride, envy, and a contentious disposition, which they and their admirers mistake for the warm glow of a pure zeal. I am led to draw this unfavourable conclusion from the vehemence and acrimony of their language. The love of truth operates indeed steadily and uniformly, but not violently. It is the love of victory and superiority which sharpens the style. The desire of literary fame, of becoming the patron or leader of a sect, of silencing the voice of opposition, usually inspires that eagerness and warmth of temper, which it is not natural that the truth or falsehood of any speculative opinion should excite. I will not mention the names of many illustrious polemical divines, whom death has removed beyond the reach of their opponents' anger; but I will lament over their graves, that they imbittered their own

lives, rendered themselves disagreeable to others, and disobedient to God's law of charity, without the smallest advantage to those churches which they pretended to serve, or to the general cause of Christianity.

Sensible and moderate Christians among the unlearned, cannot but be offended when they see their teachers disputing on subjects of religion, with an acrimony which no religion, and much less the Christian, can justify. They argue with great appearance of reason, that those persons cannot be sincere in teaching charity, who appear themselves totally destitute of it towards their brethren. So that I may venture to affirm, that religious controversies, when conducted with animosity, whatever abilities may be displayed on either side, are injurious to the cause of Christianity which they pretend to promote. I hope, in this enlightened age, whenever ecclesiastical combatants are disposed to proceed beyond the limits of moderation, the public will turn away their eyes from the indecent contest, and thus discourage it by contempt and neglect. This, I believe, is the most effectual method of discouraging it, as such controversies owe their violence to pride and vanity, which can no longer be gratified when readers, hearers, and spectators, unanimously refuse their attention.

It is dangerous to begin a religious dispute. On no subject do the angry passions take fire so soon as on religion. The most lamentable events in history have been caused by religious rage. An enthusiasm, similar in its effects to real madness, originates from ungoverned zeal in ecclesiastical controversies. Let us then, as we value the cause of Christianity, our own tranquillity, and the prosperity of our country, avoid those violent disputes which infallibly tend to

injure them all. *The beginning of strife is like as when one letteth out water*, says holy writ; no one knows whether he shall be able to stop the torrent; and whether himself and his opponent, as well as every thing for which they contended, may not be overwhelmed in the deluge.

But virulence and rage are not only visible in religious, but also in literary discussions. It might be supposed, that in such disputes, where no interest is concerned, truth might be elucidated by opposition without enmity. A liberal and generous contest excludes not mutual benevolence; but here also, it is to be feared that victory, not truth, is the object of pursuit. A defeat argues an inferiority of knowledge and of abilities; and a conquered combatant would rather, that truth and all her interests should be deserted, than that his pride should be humbled by submission. Knowledge, when used only for the purposes of haughty disputation, *puffeth up; but charity edifieth;* that is, a benevolent disposition, without much learning, will contribute more to real improvement, than profound science, with envy, and a contentious disposition.

I mean not to suggest, that learned disputations, or liberal contentions, are of no value. As iron sharpeneth iron, so does the ability of one man improve that of another, by a kind of collision. But I wish all who engage in controversy to preserve the liberality of gentlemen, and that indeed which includes it, the charity of true Christians; remembering, that the glory of conquering an antagonist is not comparable to the satisfaction of conquering ourselves, and becoming emancipated by our own efforts from the slavery of pride and anger.

But to return to the scenes of private life and social intercourse, where envying and strife are most

visible, and most productive of confusion, I will only add a short exhortation. Let us all duly consider, of how little value this world, and all it contains, is, to a creature who exists but for a short time; and who is liable, every hour of his existence, to be called from all which attaches his heart, and dazzles his imagination. The best things which the world can bestow, are not, in the eye of the true Christian, worthy to excite a virulence of resentment, or cause a violation of the law of love. Let us, I say, seriously consider this, and act in consequence of such a conviction. If we can obtain any honour or advantage without violation of justice and charity, there is certainly no reason to decline it; but let us avoid all disputes in which rivalry may induce us to injure and vex our competitors. Let us also endeavour, as we value our own tranquillity, to cultivate a peaceable temper; to seek peace and ensue it; and, as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men. Most of us are ready to profess a regard for peace, and attribute all the blame of its violation to the perverseness and ill-usage of an adversary. But have we really done every thing in our power to prevent the rupture before it began, and to close it afterwards by amicable reconciliation? I fear, there are but few among those who live in a state of enmity, who can with truth answer this question in the affirmative. Let all, then, who, notwithstanding the plausible words of their lips, are conscious that they have not done all that in them lies to avoid the violation of charity, or to restore it when violated, enter immediately, before this day's sun goes down, on the performance of a duty, which reason, religion, and common humanity require.

But as exhortations merely moral, and precepts founded only in human wisdom, have not been suffi-

ciently efficacious in correcting the malignity of the human heart, I must most earnestly entreat you, to pray to him who ruleth the heart, and is able, by the secret influence of his holy spirit, to purify all its pollutions, to correct all its errors, and to assist you in your endeavours in the cultivation of a charitable and peaceful disposition. He will, if you sincerely ask for so great a blessing, bestow on you that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtue; wherefore, from this hour, *laying aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies, and all evil-speaking, as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*

And may your prayers be heard, and granted, by that benevolent Spirit to whom be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, might, majesty, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

THE CUNNING OE THE WICKED INCONSISTENT WITH WISDOM.

JEREMIAH, iv. 22.—*They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.*

THERE are persons in the world, who are celebrated for shrewdness and sagacity; who understand business, who know how to acquire money in abundance, and to preserve and improve their acquisitions; but who, at the same time, are acknowledged to have no pretensions to goodness of heart, or that kind of wisdom which the Scriptures recommend. They are known to do many things, which, if they are strictly just, are hard; they are tormented by continual

anxiety and suspicion; and however they may boast of wisdom, they are certainly guilty of extreme folly, if to renounce innocence, a good conscience, and tranquillity, can deserve that appellation.

I shall think our time and attention well employed, in endeavouring to convince them of their error, and to lead them from false wisdom and false happiness, to such conduct as produces enjoyments at once substantial and durable.

Different men appear to view the world with different degrees of attachment to it. Some are so passionately fond of it, as to determine at all events, and whatever it may cost them, to possess a considerable share of it. They observe, that more is to be gained by art and cunning, than by real merit and sincerity. They learn to watch for opportunities favourable to their designs; and if, in the course of their negotiations, they find a man who is unsuspicious, because he is honest, they select him as their proper and natural prey, and as furnishing full scope for the practice of their artful machinations. They are, it must be acknowledged, too often successful; for the good are not on equal terms with the wicked, in the contests for worldly profit and preferment. But what do they gain of real and durable satisfaction? If their gains are weighed against the pleasures of a good conscience and a good character, they will be found light as the dust in the balance. The honest man whom they over-reach, is far happier than they, even though he should be so far injured by them as to be reduced to poverty. It is better to be cheated, than to cheat. The worldly wise man does not see his folly in the midst of worldly affluence. He trusts in riches and honours, and exalted station; but the time will certainly arrive, when he will feel the weakness, or rather madness, of putting

his trust in any thing but the approbation of conscious virtue, and the well-grounded hopes which the Christian religion must always afford to the faithful.

There are others, who value themselves greatly on their skill in games of chance; who live apparently for no other purpose, but to shake the dice, or to win and lose by any other casual contingencies. It must be acknowledged, that many of their sports and games require a great deal of ingenuity and care in the successful practice of them. But they incur great temptation to wrong, and frequently commit it, when engaged in play with those who are not equally skilful in the various games, and in the doctrine of chances. Their characters are thus sullied, and their peace of mind interrupted. They are afraid of detection. They are afraid of a vicissitude of fortune, and indeed often experience it. They are either elevated with joy beyond all the bounds of reason, or they are depressed with grief in the same degree. Their grief often terminates in despair; for none are found to be guilty of suicide so frequently, as gamesters by profession. After all their pretensions to sense and judgment, can they justly be esteemed wise, or even able men, who pursue such a course of life, as is inconsistent with peace and reputation?

There are again many who value themselves on those polite accomplishments and shining arts, which enable them to seduce the innocent to ruin, and to destroy the happiness of families. Their arts are subtle, their behaviour refined; and they too often succeed in the immediate objects of their pursuit. But they pay a dear price for all their acquisitions. They are avoided by all decent and respectable persons, as soon as their characters are known. They are loaded with the reproaches of those whom they have deeply injured, and they are stung by remorse.

What avail an insinuating address and an artful management, an assiduous attention and an unwearied perseverance in pursuit, if the result is infamy, anguish, and repentance?

How much happier it had been for the seducers themselves, as well as for society, if they had exerted their agreeable and active powers in sweetening domestic intercourse, and adding to the security and comfort of family connection? Many a broken heart would have beat with joy at their presence, and taken refuge under their protection. O that ye could bear witness to the villainy and folly of seduction, ye numerous tribes both of men and women, who have been brought by its consequences to an untimely grave! I wish it were possible to call you from your clay-cold mansions, to appal with your pale and sorrowful looks the gay, the riotous, the unthinking debauchee, who like the evil spirit, *goes about seeking whom he may devour*, and prides himself on that cunning which enables him to diffuse deep and lasting misery for the sake of selfish and momentary gratification.

Listen, young man, and return from the paths that lead to destruction, while a return is practicable! Thousands have tried the course of life which you pursue, and have, with a sigh, confessed that it is deceitful; and that, though it looks pleasant on the first entrance, it ends in darkness and horror. Suppose the cause of the seduced person, that of your own near relation, that of your daughter or of your wife. Your blood boils within you at the idea. Feel then for others, and endeavour to subdue those passions which you have hitherto fomented; and to which you have given the strength of habits, by long indulgence. Value not yourself any longer, on that address and ability which render you successful in

destruction. You have been hitherto *wise only to do evil,* than which there can be no greater folly.

Taste the pleasures of benevolence; of sparing the innocent, those whom a confidence in your apparent goodness may have placed in your power; and experience, whether any transitory pleasure, any poor triumph over the defenceless, can exceed the sublime, the godlike enjoyment. Your wisdom will be evinced in laying aside every alluring art, on which you have hitherto felt an ill-grounded pride and self-complacency.

All those who are distinguished by vice of any kind, who seek their own private pleasure or profit, in such a manner as to give just cause of offence, or to injure others, are to be numbered among the persons characterised in the text, as being *wise to do evil*; but having *no knowledge to do good,* that is, to promote real happiness and rational enjoyment.

Many have been the disputes of philosophers, on the chief good and the true wisdom. It is evident, that TO DO GOOD, AS FAR AS OUR INFLUENCE EXTENDS, IS OUR CHIEF GOOD AND ONLY WISDOM. To approach nearest to God, is to approach to perfection; but how can we approach so nearly to that fountain of all good, as by doing good in every possible sense of that expression?

No one will dispute the propriety of doing good to ourselves. This is at once the dictate of nature, and of duty. But how shall we effect it? What is our good? Does it consist in pampering our appetites, and rioting in sensuality? in gratifying the passions of pride, envy, or ambition? Certainly not; though the votaries of this world act as if they were convinced, that the happiness of man depends on sensual pleasure, grandeur, and opulence. Let them maintain by their conduct, or by arguments, any system

which they may casually have adopted; it is certain, that the good or happiness of every man depends rather on his restraint, than his indulgence of exorbitant passions. Peace, tranquillity, self-possession, are necessary to all true happiness; but will any one affirm, that these are to be enjoyed by those who are deeply engaged in gaming, in seduction, in pursuit of unbounded wealth, or the contests of ambition? The agitations of competition, frequent disappointments, hope and fear in the extremes; these prevent all solid enjoyment, weary and embarrass the mind with constant anxiety, and not only imbitter, but abbreviate existence.

To do good to ourselves, is to promote the welfare of our minds and bodies, by constantly cultivating the one, and purifying and strengthening the other, by temperance and exercise. Our souls are ourselves: to watch over their state; to cure all their diseases by applying to the physician of souls, Jesus Christ; to sacrifice all advantages of this world, and all pleasures of sense, to their improvement, this is to do good to ourselves; substantial good, such as shall continue its beneficial effect upon us in the present life, and through eternity. To have this regard for ourselves, and to consult our good in this extended sense, is to be laudably selfish, and truly wise. They who feel no inordinate attachment to what the world madly pursues, to pleasures, wealth, and honours, and silently seek an acquaintance with God, with their own souls, and with their duty, appear indeed foolish and enthusiastic in the eye of the men of the world; but they experience, in the solid pleasures which an intercourse with heaven affords, that enjoyment which no worldly cunning or abilities can possibly procure.

Man was placed in this world that he might be

continually employed in doing good to himself in this liberal sense; that he might secure to himself both temporal and eternal good; ease of mind, and the favour of God, who alone can bestow unmixed felicity.

As man is compounded of two different principles, a spiritual and a corporeal, it is his duty to preserve and improve them both, by the exertion of his reason, and by prayer. He will have a due regard to his health, which is best preserved by temperance and industry. He will have a still greater regard for the state and condition of his soul, which is preserved and improved by piety and charity. He will, by a constant vigilance, promote the welfare of both, and thus *have the knowledge to do good* to himself, in such a manner as to be able to do good to others most effectually; for it can never be denied, that he who preserves his body and soul in a vigorous state, is better able to serve his neighbour and society, than he who, by intemperate pleasures, and a regard for the things of this world only, corrupts and weakens both his animal and spiritual nature.

He who is ingenious in luxury, and sagacious in the pursuit and improvement of unlawful pleasures, cannot be said to be wise in any other respect, than *wise to do evil.* He has *no knowledge to do good,* and no inclination. The apparent good which he pursues is delusive, and, however fair its appearance, terminates in evil.

But he who is really wise, not only pursues good himself, but promotes it in his neighbour. He never wishes to derive advantage from injuring another. On the contrary, he would choose to suffer an injury himself, rather than to hurt any man for private emolument, however considerable.

He deems it not folly to forego an opportunity of advancement or advantage, when there is a probability that his success is not to be obtained but at the expense of another's interest, and of justice. But the wise man of this world lays it down as a maxim, that no profit or honour is to be relinquished, which can be obtained consistently with a fair appearance, with secresy, and with safety.

The good and religious man is not contented with avoiding the commission of injuries; he is vigilant to discover opportunities for the practice of benefits, and the diffusion of comfort. He exerts his ingenuity and sagacity, in discovering proper objects for the exercise of his beneficence. He feels the miseries of life, and learns, from his own sufferings, to sympathize with the unhappy.

If he is rich, he bestows a part of his riches on the poor, with regular bounty and with sincere cheerfulness. If he is wise, or particularly skilled in the knowledge of any art or science, he is willing to exert his abilities, and display his accomplishments, for the benefit of others, and the community at large, as well as for his own profit, or reputation.

He is, in a word, wise to do good to his neighbour by every possible mode. To do him evil, he has no knowledge. He possesses not the arts of villains and deceivers; he has never studied them, and his heart would forbid him to practise them if he were able.

But I dwell no longer on the topic of beneficence. It is a duty recommended by the strong feelings of the human heart; and, lest they should not be duly attended to, by the most frequent injunctions of the holy Gospel of Jesus Christ. To do good to others, or to practise charity, constitutes the very summit of all Christian excellence, and therefore it can

require no proof that it is the mark of the highest wisdom of which an human creature is capable.

But is the worldling observed to seek occasions to serve his fellow-creatures? Does he use his best faculties in devising modes of relieving want, and mitigating pain? Does he not rather avoid, like the proud priest and unfeeling Levite, the sight of another's misery, lest he should be induced to remove it at the expense of his dearly beloved pelf? He is too wise, as he deems it, to put himself to any charge in relieving the wants of one who will never have an opportunity of returning the favour. To use his own phrase in expressing his own idea, *he knows better, than thus to stand in his own light.* There are, he argues, expenses enough which cannot be avoided, and it would therefore be a folly to give away any thing which can be withheld without violation of legal justice. It would be madness, according to the wisdom of this world, to forego any profit for the sake of others, merely from the principles of Christianity and philanthropy.

Thus we see the wise man of this world skilled in nothing which contributes to his own essential benefit, or to the benefit of his neighbour. We see him indulging a culpable selfishness to the utmost extreme. We see him little scrupulous of the means of accomplishing his purposes; and hesitating at neither meanness nor fraud, when they can be practised consistently with safety and concealment. And is this wisdom? It is the poor and narrow-minded wisdom of those to whom this world, and the external goods of fortune as they are termed, are the only objects of delight. But it is not the wisdom of those happier persons, who possess minds enlarged by

Christianity, and who see things in such a light, as induces them to think the possession of wealth, and the enjoyments of sensuality, totally worthless, when compared to a good conscience and the favour of God.

The world is too much inclined to compliment with the title of wise men, those who seek only their own worldly prosperity with address and success. Such characters are admired as exhibiting examples of prudence, and frequently pointed out for the imitation of young men. It would greatly serve the cause of virtue and religion, if the world would reform its opinion of wisdom; and give the praise of it not to mere worldlings, but to the pious and honest; to men who lift up their minds from this low earth, and aspire at an excellence and happiness, which nothing sublunary can bestow; who *mind not earthly things, but heavenly.*

Let me prevail with all who hear me, to reform their judgments, if they have hitherto thought that a skill in the arts of acquiring and improving an estate constitutes true wisdom; if they have indulged their selfish love of profit and honours, at the expense of their fellow-creatures. *To be wise to do evil,* is extreme folly. Address in business, and prudence in the management of affairs, are certainly valuable and useful; but they must be controlled by strict moral honesty, or they may become a snare to their possessors, and lead them into temptation. If the end is evil, no skill in using the means can entitle a man to praise and esteem. The end will corrupt the means; as well as the means, the end.

I ardently wish, that I could prevail with all who hear me this day, to divest themselves of all ambition of being esteemed wise, independently of being good. Such wisdom is the wisdom of the

serpent, the cunning of that evil being who delights in mischief and misery. The world speaks in terms of high approbation of able men, whose ability seems to consist in little else than a subtle policy; an address in managing a bargain, and taking advantage of others, who, from a want of worldly cunning or from ignorance, are liable to deception. I am concerned to remark, that such a character is frequently extolled and admired above all others; and the consequence is, that young men endeavour to acquire it, by studying the arts of cunning, rather than the generous virtues of candour and benevolence. Religion and conscience are soon sacrificed; and I know nothing which tends more effectually to diffuse vice and misery, than the admiration of abilities independently of virtue, and associated with infidelity and immorality.

Let our first endeavour be to do good, and to avoid evil. If we can accomplish this end, we are sufficiently wise. Others may over-reach us in a negotiation. Others may, in consequence of their subtilty, become richer or greater than ourselves; but our wisdom will be evinced in the final result, and even in the general course of our lives. We shall enjoy peace, and a good conscience. Hope of God's favour will brighten every prospect; and there is every reason to believe, that while the children of this world, who in their generation are wiser than the children of light, shall be excluded from the presence of God, we shall be admitted (our good intentions and endeavours being accepted as a compensation for our defects) to the right hand of him, in whose gift are pleasures, riches, and honours, far beyond what we can desire or deserve.

Then may the worldly-wise say, "*We fools accounted their lives madness, and their end to be*

*without honour. How are they numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints!"**

SERMON XIX.

ON THE SNARES OF THE DEVIL, AND MEANS OF ESCAPING THEM.

MATT. vi. 13.—*But deliver us from evil.*

ANY attempt to elucidate a passage in a prayer which every Christian uses privately in his closet, and which the wisdom of our church has directed to be used in every separate office, will justly claim your serious attention.

I mean not, however, to arrogate the merit of making a new discovery, when I inform you, that the words, *deliver us from evil,* have been commonly misunderstood. They have been supposed to convey a petition for a deliverance from evil in general, moral, and natural; and indeed, in this sense, the meaning is comprehensive, and such as must receive the sincere assent of every mortal.

But it is justly observed, that the original signifies a petition for deliverance from the power of the *evil one,* and ought to be translated—deliver us from THE EVIL ONE;—from Satan, the adversary of mankind, from whom all the sin and misery of man derive their origin.

In this age, in which many make pretensions both to wit and philosophy, without any just claim to common sense or common honesty, attempts have been made to ridicule or reason away the belief of an evil spirit; and there seems to be cause for surmising, that

* Wisdom, v. 4.

they who believe not in the existence of Satan, are equally incredulous on the subject of all revealed religion. It is indeed certain, and beyond possibility of dispute, that the Holy Scriptures declare the reality of evil spirits and fallen angels, and of ONE, who is eminent among them, as their chief or tyrant. So that he who ventures to reject the belief of Satan, the adversary of God and man, must at the same time reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

They are, however, many who cannot induce themselves to avow a total disbelief of the Gospel, who yet would explain away the doctrine of devils as merely allegorical and figurative. They choose to be Christians; they are shocked at the idea of professing infidelity, yet they would fashion the Gospel according to their own ideas of propriety, and accept such doctrines only as quadrate with their own prepossessions.

Before I proceed any farther on the interesting subject which I have chosen for your present meditation, I will desire you to recollect those plain texts of Scripture, which no ingenuity of interpretation can so far distort, as to prevent them from declaring plainly, the actual existence and great power of the *evil one.*

You cannot require a repetition of the history of Adam's fall, and of the part which Satan acted in effecting it. You cannot require to be informed, that Christ was to bruise the head of the serpent; that is, the Devil: and you must be credulous indeed, if you will believe that the Devil, so often mentioned in the New Testament, is only an allegorical personage.

It is the doctrine of the Scriptures, however it may be derided by minute philosophers, that the Devil and his angels, or evil spirits, have their present habitation in the circumambient air; from

which convenient situation they survey mankind, and take every opportunity of seducing, corrupting, and leading them to destruction. Satan himself is called by St. Paul, *the prince of the power of the air.* This situation constitutes their place of exile from heaven. This is the prison in which God hath reserved them unto the judgment of the great day. *And the angels which kept not their first estate,* saith St. Jude, *but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. For God spared not the angels,* as we read in St. Peter, *which sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;* or, as it is interpreted by Joseph Mede, having adjudged the angels that sinned to hell torments, "he delivered them to be kept, or reserved, (in the airy region, as in a prison,) for chains of darkness at the day of judgment."

But to discover the local residence of these evil beings, is not of the greatest consequence to us. Our first object with respect to them is, to be convinced of their real existence, and the greatness of their power. I could produce many other passages, which tend to prove, that *we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places;* but you need only open the books of the Gospel to find them yourselves.

The grand adversary is called, "*the god of this world, the prince of this world, and the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*"*

I proceed to the practical consideration of my

* Ephesians, ii. 2.

subject, from which I hope you will receive some imperfect hints, which may assist you in escaping the snares which the great adversary is continually placing in the path through which we are compelled to travel in the pilgrimage of life.

I pretend not to account for the mode in which the evil being acts on the human mind. I am no less ignorant of this, than the most ignorant of my hearers. It is one of those *secret things which belong unto the Lord,* and the knowledge of which is not allowed to man; because it would evidently serve no valuable end, and merely contribute to gratify a vain curiosity. But that evil beings are able to influence the mind, is evident; not only from Scripture, but from actual experience of that which passes in our own minds, and in the conduct of mankind in the transactions of life.

Who is there that has not frequently and habitually acted in contradiction both to his conscience and his reason? And to what will he ascribe his deviation from a rule which himself acknowledges to be a right one, and to deserve his observation? To his passions, perhaps; and it is indeed true that his passions will occasion sudden sallies, and temporary misbehaviour; the result of surprise and violent emotion. But they will not cause a long, a cool, a deliberate course of wickedness, in opposition to better knowledge. To account for such wickedness, we must have recourse to the influence which the Devil is allowed to exercise over those who neglect the proper means of resisting and subduing his dominion. I see and approve better things, says the wretched slave of Satan, but I follow worse. Why; but because he is dragged in chains by the enemy and tyrant, who has led him captive, deserted as he was by the shield of faith, and the armour of grace?

There sometimes appear among men, such abandoned creatures, as seem to delight in evil for its own sake, and to whom iniquity and all uncleanness are joys congenial with their nature, independently of any worldly profit, or carnal pleasure, which they may hope to derive from it. They wallow like the unclean animal, which has been so often an emblem of moral impurity, in all filthiness, which to them is grateful as the rose to the smell, or the rainbow to the eye.

To what is such depravity to be attributed? To early neglect, to bad company, to evil communication, which has opened the heart for the reception of the evil one in the tender years of infancy, when whatever takes possession is not easily displaced. The heart appears to be entirely possessed by the Devil, under his absolute disposal, so as to be hurried on with blind precipitation to all that is detestable and ruinous. These are they who are so frequently brought to the human tribunal; murderers, robbers, not from passion or sudden temptation, but delighting in blood, and glorying in successful deceit. These are they who are guilty of crimes not to be named; these are they who delight in diffusing mischief among their fellow-creatures, in corrupting and seducing all who are within their sphere of influence, and who not only refuse to pay to God the adoration due to him, but set omnipotence at defiance, and deride the power that can annihilate them with a nod, or, which is infinitely worse, doom them to eternal condemnation.

We stand aghast when we hear of such enormous wickedness, and thank Heaven that we are free from it. But let us not trust in ourselves with presumptuous confidence. There is not a crime of which human nature is capable, into which we, as partakers

of that nature, may not fall, when deserted, through our own impiety, by the grace of God, and left to ourselves; which is, in truth, *to be given over to the power of Satan.* When left to ourselves, we cannot stand; but, like infants, totter at every step, or lie prostrate, at the mercy of him who will deign to take us up. But the Devil, we learn, is a vigilant being, always intent on his prey. The circumspection of man is not able to guard against him; for he assumes a thousand shapes, and will not hesitate to take even the lovely form of truth and innocence, to secure his devoted victim. And when once he has seized a son of Adam, who can say whither he will lead him? From small and insensible gradations, he will conduct him to the highest wickedness; and the most innocent among us, under his influence, may become not only habitually corrupt and evil, but the perpetrator of crimes, at the mention of which, he now cannot but shudder.

To avoid this dreadful misfortune of falling under the power of the evil one, let me conjure you, to avoid the beginnings of evil, the very first tendency to moral and religious degeneracy. Great, indeed, is the danger of every one of us. Be not secure and confident. You tread on embers, which may burst into a consuming fire; you walk on the brink of a precipice. All your anxious care, all your unwinking vigilance, is necessary to preserve you from your great adversary. But let me ask, whether hitherto your care and vigilance have not been chiefly bestowed in acquiring or securing a share of this perishable world, its riches, or its grandeur? Ask your own hearts the question, and to God and your own hearts make the answer; for to them, who are not to be deceived, you are accountable.

The world is indeed the enticing bait which Satan

uses for the capture of men. Riches, honours, pleasures, these are the allurements which draw men to destruction, as the sweet ointment attracts the fluttering insect, who falls into the snare to rise no more. The wings on which it ascended with joy into the free region of æther, are all clogged and defiled, and after many a painful ineffectual struggle, the transient taste of sweets is followed by death.

On the love of riches I might enlarge without limits. It is so obviously the cause of sin and misery that every moralist, and religious teacher, has expatiated on it, as the misfortune of human nature, and the source of all evil. All kinds of fraud and violence which have disgraced and disturbed society, have originated from greediness of gain. It has been always observed and complained of, but with so little effect, that it is at this moment no less remarkable and deplorable, than in any age, which any satirist or observer on men and manners has ever laboured to stigmatize and admonish.

I hope ever to avoid the weakness and ignorance of those, who represent the times in which they live, as the worst to be found in the annals of history; but, at the same time, I cannot be so affectedly candid, as to conceal my opinion, that the frauds in the pursuit of money are, in the present age, conducted with more refinement and systematical ingenuity, than in ages of greater simplicity. The most eminent and honourable among the mercantile ranks have justly complained, that fraud is practised with an improved subtilty which marks the present times; and that it is difficult for the most sagacious and experienced to have transactions with the busy world without imposition.

I am sorry to be able to add, that much of this evil arises from the little reverence paid to the most

awful asseveration that can be made, an appeal to the God of truth, for the truth of a solemn assurance. Oaths are used in many offices, in the transaction of commercial business, without any form; and it is to be feared, too often with such mental reservation as may deceive the world, yet cannot but involve the mercenary wretch who uses it in the atrocious crime of perjury.

Could I but lift up my voice, and be heard by that busy crowd which is hastening to be rich, and dares to trifle with oaths in pursuit of the mammon of unrighteousness! Foolish man, I might say to him who treacherously touches the holy book, for what art thou endangering thy immortal soul, and delivering thyself up to the power of Satan? For a few bags of pelf, worthless as the dust on which thou treadest, as soon as thou shalt cease to breathe, which must be soon, and may be this hour? Pause a while! Pray for grace, and thy eyes shall be enlightened from heaven; and Satan, who now beholds the contract sealing between him and thee, will retire to his native darkness, the region of sorrow; there to moan over his disappointment, while all heaven's choir shall sing with joy over the soul of a sinner snatched from hell.

So loud is the noise of business, as it is called, or the jarring turmoil which avarice occasions, that I fear the still small voice of reason will not be heard in the walks of the exchange, and in the storehouses of the crowded emporium. But let us pity the wretched multitude; and let us pray, that they may see the error of their ways, and escape the snares of the Devil, into which too many of them are eager to run, as the bird into the net, *but knoweth not that it is for its life.*

Let us take heed to ourselves while we sympathize

with others; and if any one who now hears me, is in the way of unjust gain, let him pause, and pray with unaffected fervour, that God Almighty would deliver him from the evil one, who most certainly is tempting him with the powerful enticement of lucre, to such conduct and depravity, as, though it should gain the whole world, will terminate in the loss of the soul.

There is a circumstance in the nefarious conduct of many who perjure themselves for the sake of clandestine gain, which seems to evince, that they are under the influence of the evil spirit. They sin not from want; for though want may not excuse, yet it may, in some degree, extenuate the malignity of their offence; but they thus insult both God and man in the midst of abundance, and for the sake of adding to stores already superfluous. This is unmixed covetousness, and leads to every base and wicked action. As it is entirely unreasonable even in a worldly light, and contributes to no real enjoyment, but merely to fancied bliss, there is no doubt, but they who are under its influence, are, at the same time, under the dominion of Satan. Mistaken mortals, who sell their peace and their souls for that which can afford them no equivalent! Equivalent? what can be a compensation for the loss of peace and the favour of God?

But those who are actuated by the love of lucre are frequently urged to the commission of crimes of which the consequences are death by human laws. They know it; they see the gaol and the gibbet prepared for them. They are convinced that pain and shame will be their portion; yet do they rush on in the same evil course, as if they were unable to retard their progress to destruction. Such unhappy persons do indeed exhibit most melancholy proofs,

that Satan is able to govern the mind entirely, when it is once depraved. And he who duly attends to such examples, will not, I think, long hesitate to believe the great influence of the evil one, and to pray for deliverance from him. Men who supported a character of integrity and honour have, we know, fallen into the most disgraceful and fatal frauds, in opposition to the tenour of all their former words and actions. Let us take warning; for if we are not upon our guard, the degeneracy which we deplore in others, may be our own.

But honours and rank in life are objects which Satan holds out to many, when he attempts to seduce them from obedience to God. With what ardour do men pursue civil and political distinctions? Their whole souls are engaged in the pursuit. Truth, justice, and mercy, are forgotten or violated. Murder by violence, or secret assassination, has been the frequent effect of ambition. Deceit of all kinds is judged wisdom, in the machinations of those who, pretending a regard to their king and country, intend only their own personal advancement. Whence comes this madness? Comes it not from him who is styled in the Scripture, the *prince of this world;* who was himself an example of ambition, and who delights in suggesting temptations to mortals, which may lead them to tread in his steps, and accompany him in his wretched degradation?

But the most powerful allurement which the apostate angel offers, is sensual pleasure. He knows that man, in his present state, participates the nature of the brutes; and he is constantly endeavouring to bring him still nearer to that humiliating condition.

To contend against pleasure, when innocent, would be to contend against nature. Every animal is endowed with sensibility, and must prefer the

agreeable to the disagreeable sensations; and nature has constituted pleasure one of the chief inducements to man, for the accomplishment of her purposes. So far all is right and wise; for it is the ordinance of God; but the subtle power of darkness avails himself of this constitution of human affairs in producing evil and misery.

Who is it that suggests to the heart of man, that unlawful pleasures are more agreeable than lawful? Who can it be, but that malignant spirit who urged our first parents to taste the forbidden fruit? It is very apparent to reason, that a prohibition can have no natural and regular effect in exalting an enjoyment. It might reasonably be supposed, that it would lower it, by a consciousness of doing wrong, and a fear of detection, and its consequences. But the Devil whispers to the corrupt heart of man, that the fruit is the sweeter because it is stolen.

All excessive and irregular pleasures, such as degrade man even below the brutes, are pursued from the instigation of the Devil. And as all kinds of wickedness are allied to each other, since indeed they are the offspring of the same parent, he who is led into excessive and irregular pleasures, seldom stops at the criminal indulgence, but, either in defence or concealment of it, proceeds to perjury, robbery, murder, every sin which Satan can delight to promote, in defiance of the God of purity.

I have thus briefly considered the three great objects of human pursuit, riches, honours, pleasures; things which, under the conduct of reason and virtue, may be pursued with the utmost propriety; but which the enemy of man makes use of, as allurements to every sin and evil.

But there are many who do not appear to be particularly influenced by the love of either of these

idols, who yet give too much reason to fear, that they are under the malignant influence of the evil one. I mean those who, arrogating to themselves, I know not what, of philosophy and superior strength and reason, reject all revelation, and seem to live without God in the world. Weak as they certainly are, like every mortal, they dare to depend upon themselves alone, and scorn to ask happiness from any superior. They send forth writings, in which they censure the oldest and most important institutions, with the decisive air of an oracle. They would be the legislators of the human race; and in order to show their superior understanding and spirit, would begin the work, by dismissing all religions, or, as they contemptuously term them, all modes of human superstition. Their foolish presumption arises from pride, and their pride is derived from him whose pride was his ruin.

These pretended philosophers are engaged in the work of the Devil, and might with propriety be called his apostles. Their writings have, in our own times, disseminated many of those evil principles which have been adopted by the fashionable and fanciful, and have produced corresponding practices. I must earnestly recommend it to all who are desirous of escaping a most dangerous infection, to avoid such writings entirely, or at least not to approach them till they are furnished with the powerful antidote of faith in Jesus Christ.

I come to the most important part of my subject. I have endeavoured to represent to you the extent of Satan's influence, and the danger every one incurs, of falling into his snares, in pursuing the usual objects of human desire. I proceed to suggest such means as will infallibly secure every man who will

have recourse to them, from the power of this formidable adversary.

The means, indeed, are such, as must occur to every thinking Christian; and I mention them rather for the sake of admonition, than as pretending to give you information.

The two means prescribed, both by reason and Scripture, are vigilance and prayer. *Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.*

Every prudent commander proportions his defence to the strength and subtilty of his enemy. We know that we have to contend with a being, who, though fallen, still possesses great power and peculiar cunning. We must therefore fully convince our own minds, that we shall not be able to escape him unless we use the utmost circumspection. There is no doubt, but that he will exert his powers, in every form and mode which his experience, as well as his craft, proposes to him, as the most likely to succeed. He will even assume the specious garb of truth and goodness. We read, that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." But, notwithstanding all his arts and disguises, our consciences will discover him in his true shape, if we listen impartially to their suggestions; and the assistance of Heaven will certainly be afforded whenever we seriously prepare to resist him. *Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him, and delivers them. Angels are sent to minister to them that are appointed heirs of salvation.* Though the good man should fall, through temporary inadvertence, *he shall not be cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him in his hand, and greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world.*

But to secure the assistance of Heaven, and our

conquest over the apostate, it will be necessary to have recourse to prayer; and, fortunately for us, our Lord Jesus Christ hath himself taught us the prayer which shall be effectual. • *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

Our Saviour has, in these words, pointed out the great objects which we ought to have in view in our daily prayer; but there is no reason to suppose, that he intended to confine us to any form of words. Whenever, therefore, we shall be assaulted by temptation, and the powerful solicitations of the diabolical tempter, let us express our prayer to God in the warm ejaculation which the particular circumstance shall suggest. We must be instant in prayer, for nothing can repel our enemy so certainly. We must not be satisfied with formal repetitions of prayer on the Lord's day, or at morning and evening; but, in every dangerous assault, lift up our hearts to God, our succour and support. "The life of a good man," it was said by one of the heathens, "is full of prayer." And let us not imagine, that the church or our closet only, are fit places for supplication. We may secretly *pray without ceasing*, as we are following our occupation; in the street and forum, in the field, or amidst the family. The heart may pray, though the voice be silent, and no expression of the countenance disclose what passes within us. Guard yourselves with prayer, as with armour in your Christian warfare; but avoid hypocrisy.

So kind and condescending is our Father in heaven, that he will certainly shower down his grace in plentiful emanations, if we will but duly prepare our hearts for its reception, by following the commands of our blessed Redeemer. Under his guidance, as the captain of our salvation, we shall march on to certain victory against the combined powers of the

world, the flesh, and the Devil. Let us not faint, but, like good soldiers, persevere with fidelity in the service in which we are engaged, till we shall be dismissed with honour as conquerors, and rewarded with a triumphal jubilee.

Glorious day! when we shall be exalted to the society of those pure spirits who never rebelled, and far removed from the influence of those powers of darkness, who are doomed to everlasting misery, and who vainly hope to alleviate their woe, by increasing the number of their fellow-sufferers! May God, of his infinite mercy, take pity even on those accursed beings, and, in his own good time, give them to see their error, and to repent! But I forbear to speak of dispensations, in which short-sighted men cannot interfere without danger of sinful presumption. Sufficient unto mortals are their own sin and misery, and ever blessed be he, who has given us opportunities in this life, to raise our nature to higher improvements in virtue and happiness, and to partake at last, through the merits of a triumphant Redeemer, of that heavenly dignity and happiness, which Satan and his companions in apostasy forfeited by rebellion.

SERMON XX.

MODERATION NECESSARY TO ALL SOLID AND DURABLE ENJOYMENT.

PROVERBS, XXV. 16.—*Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.*

SOME animals appear to possess an instinctive wisdom; the observation of which affords human nature with all its pretensions to superior reason, a very

instructive lesson. Man has been often sent to learn of the bee and the ant; and, indeed, they exhibit very beautiful models of foresight and persevering industry.

The production of the bee has also afforded an emblem, which both ancient and modern moralists have delighted to use in the illustration of their precepts. Honey has been the figurative appellation of all that affords pleasure to the human senses; of all that gratifies the heart, the understanding, and the imagination.*

Man, indeed, may be called, in a figurative style, a bee. In search of sweets, he roams in various regions, and ransacks every inviting flower. Whatever displays a beautiful appearance, solicits his notice, and conciliates his favour, if not his affection. He is often deceived by the vivid colour and attractive form; which, instead of supplying honey, produce the rankest poison; but he perseveres in his researches, and if he is often disappointed, he is also often successful. The misfortune is, that when he has found honey, he enters upon the feast with an appetite so voracious, that he usually destroys his own delight, by excess and satiety.

I will endeavour to improve and exalt his happiness, by recommending to him, moderation. *Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee,* says Solomon, *lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.*

The text, however, suggests several hints for useful reflection, previously to an entrance on the principal design of it.

Hast thou found honey? Think thyself happy, and be thankful. Many spend their days in care and labour, without finding it. They gather wormwood

* Hoc juvat et MELLI EST.—HOR.

and aloes, where they expected nectareous fruits. But thou art successful. Thou art blessed with prosperity. That it may indeed be a blessing, take care to feel a sense of gratitude to him who bestows the blessings of this life. Attribute not thy success to chance, or thy own endeavours only, but to Providence. Impart something of those sweets in which thou delightest, to those who have been used to bitterness; infuse a little of thy honey to sweeten their cup. Thy store may not always last, and thou in thy turn mayest wish to borrow a little from thy neighbour; who, in the various vicissitudes of life, may abound in some future day, when thou art reduced to indigence.

Hast thou found honey? Consider duly the means thou hast made use of in the research. Were they honest and honourable? Has thy gain been attended with injury to nó one? If not, congratulate thyself. Thy innocence shall add sweetness to the honey and the honey-comb; but if, on an impartial retrospect, thou findest, that in seeking for thy collection of sweets, thou hast broken thy neighbour's fence, and gone through crooked and miry ways; then fear, for thou hast reason. Thy honey shall lose its sweetness, even in thy mouth, and shall be turned into gall. Haste to restore what thou hast unfairly appropriated, and thus only shall thy palate taste the pleasure which thou hast eagerly expected.

Hast thou found honey? Remember that thou mayest lose it. Set not thy heart upon it, so as to become inconsolable in affliction. No felicity in this life is uniform. Depend upon it, as a truth confirmed by experience, that thou shalt at some time taste the bitter, as well as the sweet, ingredients in the cup of life. Be not, therefore, proud and presumptuous, but rejoice with trembling; for ever

keeping it in thy mind, that he who gave, can take away, by means undiscoverable by our most inquiring investigation. Forget not to be thankful to God for the good thou hast, and at the same time humbly resigned to his will, whenever he shall be disposed to deprive thee of a part, or the whole of it. This may be said to be a difficult task, and much more easily recommended by the preacher, than practised by him, or by his hearer; but this also is true of many instructions given from the pulpit. If the practice of that which is conducive to our happiness were easy as well as right, there would be no occasion for exhortations and persuasions. Men would proceed in the path of duty and prudence with eagerness; but it unfortunately happens, that present pleasure is more inviting, than the future advantage of duty.

Hast thou found honey? The text adds, *eat so much as is sufficient for thee.* It does not require thee to throw it away, or to abstain from the enjoyment. It commands thee to eat, and to eat until thou art satisfied. There have been gloomy moralists and austere teachers in religion, who have forbidden pleasure as inconsistent with virtue. But such prohibitions are often the effects, either of folly, hypocrisy, or enthusiasm. The text says, *eat;* eat with moderation. So says reason; and happy would it be, if the united voice of reason and religion could be heard and obeyed in the eager enjoyment of pleasure, and worldly opulence. Pleasure loses its essence, when pursued beyond a certain boundary; and prosperity ceases to confer happiness, when the insatiable mind thirsts after more, instead of acquiescing in the profusion which it has already obtained.

In the early age of youth, the world appears with

the grace of novelty. The senses are strong and lively. Things are perceived in their fullest beauties. The young and inexperienced imagine, that the enjoyment is without end, and without alloy. They little think, and seem unwilling to learn, that the best method of prolonging and exalting their delights, is to moderate their desires, and to taste them sparingly. The less frequent the indulgence, the greater the delight.

Let us suppose a common case, that of a young man, just entered on the possession of an ample fortune. Like the prodigal son, he resolves to spend his inheritance in the purchase of pleasure. Unhappily, he is unacquainted with the nature of true and permanent pleasure. He has found himself possessed of a store of honey, and he is determined to satiate his eager appetite by unlimited indulgence. He says to his soul, thou hast much goods laid up for thee; *eat, drink, and be merry.* He looks round for companions; for solitary indulgencies afford him but little delight. He is commendable in desiring to share with others the honey which he has found, but whom does he select? Not those who are remarkable for the goodness of their characters and their exemplary conduct; but the loose, the profligate, the libidinous, the drunkard, and the glutton. These, indeed, seek his acquaintance, and find, from a similarity of taste, an easy access. They, on their part, furnish noisy conversation, and subjects of coarse mirth; and he, on his part, pays the expenses of the banquet. Riot and debauchery begin their reign. Reason and modesty are immediately discarded. A few years pass without thought, for noise and excess dispel all anxiety: but this state is very far from a pleasant one; and, if it were, it would be of very transient duration. For expenses

continued, inevitably occasion distress. The creditor will not be satisfied with promises; but the debtor by this time has nothing else to pay. He has this alternative. He must lose his liberty, or leave off his expensive amusements, or go into voluntary exile. His honey is all consumed; the companions who were attracted by its sweetness are gone; and he is left to suck the bitter dregs in solitude and obscurity.

Had he duly attended to the wise precepts of Solomon, his honey might have furnished him with sweets during his life! Much of it might have been given to the poor, and much remained as an inheritance to his children. But he was not contented with eating only what was sufficient. Like the voracious and impure animal, which has ever been an emblem of gluttony, he must surfeit himself with food, and wallow in that which was intended to afford him a pure, a sweet, and a wholesome repast.

There are others who have arrived at a state of prosperity on a sudden, by the death of a wealthy relation, or by one of those unexpected events, which, in the language of the world, are called good fortune. They have found honey. Their joy is great. They are inclined to believe, that all the ills of life which they have hitherto experienced, and many of which were the lot of human nature, are such as will be removed or mitigated by the possession of affluence. With this persuasion, it is no wonder that they triumph. Their exultation is however unbounded, and therefore inconsistent with the exercise of dispassionate reason and discretion. They also, like the prodigal son whom I have just described, are of opinion that their stock of sweets is inexhaustible. They enter on life on too expensive a plan. Debts accumulate, and trouble springs up, where

they flattered themselves they should find nothing but pleasure. Disappointed in prosperity, and perhaps reduced to their original indigence, they at last subscribe, with sincere regret, to the opinion of Solomon, which declares, *that all is vanity and vexation.*

But had they eaten only as much as was sufficient, and used their opulence without abusing it, it would have contributed to sweeten life, for which gracious purpose it was designed by him who bestowed it.

Many are incapable of bearing any sudden increase of worldly honours or advantage, so that it is the mercy of Providence which keeps them in the condition out of which they are so anxious to emerge. If they should find that honey which they solicitously seek, they would eat till they destroyed themselves by repletion.

Every man has it in his power to find honey, or rather to make it; for what is contentment? As the philosopher's stone was to turn baser metals into gold, so contentment possesses a power of turning even bitter things into sweet, of giving that, which without it might be deemed insipid, a pleasant taste. We cannot subdue things to our own minds, but we can subdue our own minds to the condition of things. Even out of poisonous flowers, a contented mind can, like the bee, extract a delicious flavour. And there is this advantage attending the honey extracted by a contented mind; it is of that pure sort which never becomes sour, nor insipid, nor bitter, by the operation of external accidents.

But discontent prevents men from tasting the sweets which they have collected. Look round the world. Behold a man who has inherited or acquired an affluent fortune, and an honourable station. His neighbour is richer and greater than himself. His own riches and honours are therefore of little esti-

mation to him. He feels all the painful corrosions of envy, which alone will turn every sweet into bitter; but, besides this, he is stimulated to laborious exertions, to servile and painful attendance on his superiors, in the hope of their favour; so that he has neither time nor inclination to enjoy the feast which Providence has kindly prepared for him. He has not enough in his own eyes, though in the eyes of all impartial judges, he abounds in superfluities, and is exalted to a rank which no personal virtues or exertions seem to have deserved. But all this avails nothing, while he sees *Mordecai sitting at the gate*; he must engross the sweets of worldly prosperity, or he will sullenly refuse to taste them. The text says, *eat as much as is sufficient for thee.* Not to enjoy the blessings of Providence when they are mercifully placed before us, but to refuse them with sullen insensibility, is probably no less displeasing to our benefactor, than to surfeit and injure ourselves by excessive indulgence. Both extremes defeat the end for which the blessings were sent, and counteract the will of the gracious donor.

But the text more immediately inculcates temperance and sobriety; and I shall now proceed to consider it as intending to recommend these virtues to our practice.

There are, it must be confessed, few topics triter than those which recommend moderation in diet, and the avoidance of excess; but at the same time it is true, that there are few more necessary to be repeated, as a great part of the misery of mankind arises from the neglect of them.

The pleasures of the table are, doubtless, in their nature innocent. Providence has furnished us with nerves capable of agreeable sensations, and with an abundance and variety of food to gratify them. Both

the faculties and materials for enjoyment would have been bestowed in vain, if enjoyment had been prohibited. Eat then; but eat no more than is conducive to thy benefit, and to the satisfaction of thy natural appetite. But is this the practice of the world? Is not feasting a great part of some men's enjoyment? Do they not seem to consider it as constituting their felicity? And are they not, in this idea, most miserably mistaken? How unpleasant are the loads of gluttony! How painful the sensations consequent on indigestion! How dull the intellect, how obtuse the senses! Can happiness, or even pleasure, temporary pleasure, be consistent with such a state? Pale, bloated, languid, the very appearance of the glutton evinces that he feels himself to be uncomfortable. He will even acknowledge it. But habit has overcome him, and he continues to overgorge himself, till he has precipitated his own death; as much a suicide, though not intentionally, as if he finished his existence by a bowl of poison. His honey in excess became the cause of sickness. It remained in his vitals, corroding instead of nourishing them; and after making his days unpleasant, at last put an end to them, which indeed may almost be called the best effects of it. It must however be remembered, that intemperance is scarcely less injurious to the soul, than to the body.

He also who is guilty of excess in *wine*, converts his honey into wormwood. Wine, as a medicine, seems to be recommended in the Scripture. *Drink a little wine for thy stomach's sake.* It is allowed also to be productive of good humour, and may in that respect be conducive to charity and benevolence, those prime virtues of a true Christian.

In excess, it is hurtful to the health, and injurious to every social virtue. But I dwell not on the enu-

meration of its pernicious consequences; as the experience and observation of every man will teach him the propriety of Solomon's advice: *Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.*

Nature has implanted in the human heart the passion of love, intending to answer her own purposes; alluring men to obey her laws, by the enticement of pleasure. Nature, reason, religion, all unite with one voice in approving the enjoyments of virtuous love. But how do the voluptuary and debauchee corrupt the source of innocent pleasure? Disease, distress, and infamy, attend their excesses; and there is no fountain of human misery so copious, as that of libidinous sensuality. The selfish devotees of pleasure, who would engross to themselves all the honey of life, without tasting its plainer viands, and who scorn the wholesomest diet if it is the least bitter, are most woefully mistaken, when they think it possible to live a life of continual pleasure. Satiety, if nothing else, soon destroys the very essence of delight. But vice is an ingredient, which, like some chemical preparations, converts every sweet into acidity. The sweets of sin indeed may be compared to those snares which are laid with substances of a pleasant taste or odour, to catch the incautious insect, who no sooner tastes the deceitful banquet, but his wings are clogged, and he is chained down to rise no more. The honey of vicious pleasure is the fatal bait of youth.

But there are others who can abstain from the feast, from the cup, and from the sins of concupiscence; who yet destroy the happiness they aspire after, by not knowing when to desist from their pursuits, and to enjoy the honey they have collected.

They who are engaged in merchandise, or in any

other mode of life, the prime object of which is the accumulation of money, seldom can relinquish the means, to enjoy that end which they profess to have constantly in view. They seek a maintenance at first. They have gained it. They now wish for an independent competency. They have reached the object. Are they yet willing to rest from their labours? Alas, no! They feel an ambition to be distinguished for elegance and fashion. This ambition naturally leads them into expense. They become more avaricious than ever. They have no time for enjoyment and repose, the purposes which they first professed. Worn with cares and fatigues, they die a premature death, and leave their riches to a prodigal son, or to some heir at law, a profligate, who rejoices that they are gone, and derides that avarice which has raised himself to affluence and consequence.

Here we behold men who have found honey, but will not eat it, lest the store should be exhausted. They are still on the wing for more. They encounter many a thorn in searching for the honey-fraught flower, but nothing can deter them from the pursuit. They fill their hive till it is ready to burst, but they taste not the luscious hoard; to them it is as if it were totally destitute of sweetness, and of neither use nor value. They drop into the pit. A stranger, or at least one who laboured not in the acquisition, seizes the store, and consumes it in wanton and pernicious luxury. Who can avoid applying, in this case, that striking passage, *Man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain; he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them.*

Avarice has ever been the universal madness of human nature. The greatest part of mankind still labour under the same disease. Against no vice

have there been more numerous and just invectives, than against avarice. Yet let us not suppose, that the disease is incurable. Reason and religion furnish efficacious medicines for the cure of all mental disorders. There will be no occasion for hellebore, if we will but observe, from the misery of others, who are the slaves of pelf, the folly of avarice. To be misers, is to be our own enemies. What! shall I possess honey, and lock it up from my own use, more effectually than if it were enclosed in adamantine vessels, and guarded with flaming swords? Let us duly consider, that we cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time, and let us not hesitate one moment in deserting Mammon, for the service of him *who giveth riches, which cannot make to themselves wings; riches eternal, incorruptible in the heavens.*

Why, O man, shouldst thou be cruel to thyself? Are not the evils of life sufficient, but thou must debar thyself its goods, the moderate and reasonable enjoyments of life, through a greedy desire of heaping up riches, which thou canst never want, and will not live long enough to expend. The shortness of life ought to be more frequently in our minds, than the eager pursuits and intemperate pleasures of life allow. It would teach a lesson of wisdom more valuable than the speculative doctrines of the best philosophy. It would teach that great truth unknown to the professed votaries of pleasure or avarice, that to use the world so as not to abuse it, either by covetousness or excess, is to secure as much happiness as this world is able to bestow.

But, after all, this world is not able to bestow a great deal without mixture. There is, indeed, honey in it; but there is also gall in great abundance. The happiest among us have a share of bitterness with

our sweetness, and many have a greater portion of the unpalatable ingredient.

But as the bee extracts honey from noxious plants, so is good to be derived from this evil. Feeling, as every partaker of human nature must feel, the unsatisfactory nature of all sublunary pleasure, we learn to look for it above the moon. If we found nothing but honey in this world, I fear that some of the wisest among us would be contented with filling ourselves with it, and would not suffer the repast to be interrupted by thoughts of a better state. Adversity teaches us to think of him *who can show us the light of his countenance, and brighten the most gloomy scene; to think of him who can lead us to waters of comfort, and feed us with manna in the wilderness.*

Hast thou then found the honey of God's grace? rejoice, and thy joy shall no man take from thee. Eat, indulge thy desire, and fear not. Thou canst never be injured by excess. Grow in grace, by accustoming thyself to whatever is pious and praiseworthy. The sweetness of a virtuous conduct, of a conscience void of offence, shall be honey to thy palate, *health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.*

After all the various labours and cares of man in the pursuit of pleasure and a chief good, which in this Discourse I have figuratively called honey, in imitation of the text, it is certain that this happiness will be best secured by a truly virtuous and religious life. The favour of God is undoubtedly the chief good of man. Obtain this, and every thing that is desirable will follow. No longer roam with wearied wing from flower to flower in the fading gardens of this world, for that which is to constitute the true sweetness of life. Soar on the wings of faith and innocence to heaven; for there, and there only, canst

thou find that honey with which thy soul shall be satisfied. No satiety, no sickness, shall be the consequence of feeding on the heavenly sweets; but thou shalt enjoy perpetual health, and prolong thy life to eternity. *Butter and honey shalt thou eat,* if thy palate is qualified to relish them; *and thou shalt hunger no more, neither thirst any more* for viler food. He who feeds all his children *with food convenient for them,* shall conduct thee *to a land flowing with milk and honey, even the heavenly Canaan.*

SERMON XXI.

HAPPINESS TO BE FOUND RATHER IN THE ENJOYMENT OF HEALTH AND INNOCENCE, THAN IN THE SUCCESSFUL PURSUITS OF AVARICE AND AMBITION.

JEREMIAH, xlv. 5.—*And seeketh thou great things for thyself? seek them not. For, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord: but thy life will I give unto thee, for a prey, in all places whither thou goest.*

PLINY, the natural philosopher, who abounds in fabulous accounts, relates, that a certain bird, in plucking up the roots of a plant on which it feeds, pulls with such violence as to leave her neck behind her. Incredible as the story is, it is emblematic of the worldly man; who, in his eager attachment to some transient gratification or attainment, endangers his happiness, his health, his life, and his very soul. For the sake of the enjoyment of life, to lose the objects for which life was bestowed, is a miserable folly; to prevent which, every effort of reason and religion should be exerted. The thoughtless mul-

titude, who hasten on in the precipitate career of ambition, should be warned to reflect on the end of their pursuits, and to consider whither they are going, before they are lost in the wilderness of error.

The advice contained in the text, was addressed to Baruch; but, as the Scripture was given for the direction of all men at all times, I shall consider it less as a particular, than as a general, prohibition, intended for universal use, though to be understood under those limitations which reason evidently prescribes.

And seeketh thou great things for thyself? seek them not. For, behold, I will bring evil on all flesh, saith the Lord: but thy life will I give thee, for a prey, in all places whither thou goest.

This passage may, perhaps, be thus interpreted in a liberal paraphrase.

Art thou the slave of an excessive and selfish ambition? Art thou seeking great things, merely to gratify thy pride and thy voluptuousness? Seek them not. For riches and grandeur cannot remove natural evil; those sufferings, which I, for wise purposes, have deemed to be the lot of human nature. But I give thee existence. Be it thine to seek to render it happy by obedience to my laws, by a life of reason and virtue, by fixing thine heart on solid and substantial joys, rather than on the fleeting objects of vice and vanity.

I wish to understand by *great things*, in the text, those which are falsely called great by the world; preeminent stations, distinguished titles, affluent fortunes, splendid mansions, equipages, and retinue. It never could be the intention of the Deity, to prohibit the aspiration of man after great excellence in moral and intellectual attainments. It is impossible to be too good and too wise; for however, in

the carelessness of common converse, those expressions may be used, it is certain, that the excess intended to be signified by them, destroys the very nature and existence of the qualities, thus carried to a pitch of extravagance.

But yet, the aspirant after wisdom and goodness may deceive himself in the ardent pursuit even of excellent objects, if he is actuated by wrong motives, and aims at ends which religion cannot approve. Thus benevolence, adopted only as an atonement for sin, and practised as a commutation for all other duties, ceases to be laudable in the eye of Heaven, whatever *great things* it may effect by means of opulence, or however it may be applauded by human creatures. Having self only in view, it is no longer benevolence in the true sense. Thus learning and science, whatever advances they may make, or however they may be admired, if they are sought only to gratify pride, to raise a reputation, as means of ambition and avarice, or used in undermining the fabric of Christianity, and shaking the foundations of truth, become the more obnoxious to divine displeasure, in proportion to the *great things*, the high advances, which, by indefatigable industry, they are able to accomplish.

There is a kind of philosophy, which, endeavouring to account for every thing, puzzles itself in the mazes of its own ingenuity; and lapses into atheism, or that state of doubt and unbelief, which terminates in confusion and misery. It seeks *great things* in its own estimation, a perfect knowledge of the fitness of things; an emancipation from prejudice, and a right to arraign the ways of Providence at the bar of human reason. It inflates the heart with pride, and yet leaves it, after all, less illumined, and less tranquil, than the mind of the ignorant, yet humble

and sincere believer. It teaches to reach after the tree of knowledge, in defiance of all prohibition, and to affect a wisdom above that which is written.

But the prohibition, *Seek them not,* was intended to forbid a too anxious pursuit of what is called in another place, *the pride of life.*

If we look at the busy world, we shall find men labouring for an advancement in rank, or an increase of property, which is very unlikely to add to their real enjoyments, even when it is attained. Not only the young and healthy, who have a prospect of long life, are employed in the unceasing drudgery, but the old and infirm; those whose strength and senses are too much impaired to admit of much external delight; and those who, according to the common course of things, have but a short time to live.

A decent provision for a surviving family, is indeed a very rational object of pursuit. But avarice and ambition are found most active in the bosoms of those who have no children to inherit their honours and opulence. The same selfishness which kept them in a single unconnected state, urges them to the inordinate pursuit after riches and glory.

And even those who have families dependent on them, to justify a moderate attention to the things of the world, usually proceed farther than the laudable motive of providing for their families requires. They not only seek good things and sufficient things, but *great things.* The truth is, that they catch the spirit of avarice and ambition in their progress from reasonable parsimony and prudence. They soon forget the end, and dote upon the means. A regard for the future prosperity of their families becomes a mere cloak, to conceal the deformity of their mistaken selfishness from the eyes of others, and from their own.

Those who are thus engaged in the pursuit of *great things*, are strangers to solid and permanent satisfaction. Experience has long ago proved, that desire increases with possession. What was great before it was possessed, is no longer great when it is familiar. While greater things are in the possession of others, they excite an emulation which partakes of envy. The spirit of rivalry is scarcely compatible with self-enjoyment. The frequent failures, which, in the course of human affairs, always attend long and arduous enterprises, cause a chagrin no less inimical to health, than to ease. And if the eager votary is really actuated by a regard for his relations or posterity, in seeking *great things*, yet, as he carries his pursuit so far as to lose his own tranquillity, he sacrifices more to his children than reason can allow. For every man has, in his own life, no less right to as much happiness as he can obtain, than his posterity have to their portion of it in their period of existence.

The topic of the vanity and insubstantial happiness of human grandeur would be too common to admit repetition, if it were not evident from the conduct of mankind, that, often as it has been urged, it has not yet been urged with success sufficient to deter men from the irrational and inordinate pursuit of it. The truth is, that it has been chiefly urged in the style of rhetorical declamation, or philosophical arrogance. Ambition of every kind and degree has been the subject of invective. Truth disclaimed the mere effusions of fancy, of pride, of disappointment, and of envy. Ambition, regulated by reason, is productive of great advantages to society. No community can exist without some subordination, without offices and employments of high honour and emolument, adequate to the abilities and exertions they require. If good

men are forbidden to accept them, or voluntarily disclaim them, bad men must supply their place. And how injurious must it be to the world when vice is invested with power, decked with the robes of authority, and obtruded on the notice and consequent imitation of the people, by the lustre of a splendid example?

The excess therefore of ambition, and the excess of parsimony, that excess which leads to the neglect of the duties which man owes to himself, to his neighbour, and to God, is the error forbidden by the text. *Seek not great things*, so as to forget those which the world calls little, but which, in fact, are the greatest of all; a prudent regard to a quiet conscience, to health, to peace, to kind and just behaviour towards men; to piety, and obedience to the will of God. These should be the first objects of pursuit. Riches and honours may be secondary objects, when held, as they ought to be, in due subordination to the first, when modestly desired, wisely used, and patiently resigned.

How different the practice of the world! It is deemed spirited, noble, and manly, to hurry on in the career of ambition and avarice, without suffering the attention to be called off a moment by the restraints of religion and philosophy. Heated in the pursuit, like warriors in the midst of action, the adventurous multitude deigns not to notice, or even to feel the wounds and the falls which are scarcely avoidable. The conflict is so severe, that the victory cannot recompense the toil and danger. But victory, after all, can be but the lot of few. Thousands retire from the field, through mere inability to continue the contest; and sit down, in want, solitude, and old age, to deplore the folly of their early choice.

But let us suppose, that all who aim at *great things;* reach them at last by their perseverance. Yet, does the possession equal the expectation? Contrary to what happens in natural vision, the objects of the mind's eye, which appear great at a distance, diminish by approach. But let us proceed to suppose that expectation is not disappointed, that the grandeur and splendour which allured at first, continue to delight at last, uncontracted and unsullied; yet, can any portion of riches, any degree of greatness, remove that natural evil, which is the doom of every son of Adam?

The text adds, after forbidding the pursuit of *great things; for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord.* The denunciation of *evil upon all flesh,* is given as a reason why great things are not to be sought with exclusive and immoderate attention. The evils which are to be the lot of all men, are reasons for not placing our dependence on riches and honours; since riches and honours are in no respect exempted from pain, sickness, casualties of various kinds, and the decays of declining life.

Nothing, indeed, demonstrates the vanity of riches and honours more forcibly, than the maladies to which those who possess them are no less liable, than the poor and the obscure. A man, loaded with the trappings of state, lying under a gorgeous canopy, and groaning with the agonies of disease, affords a lesson to the worldly-minded, which, if any thing could rouse their sensibility to spiritual things, must be efficacious to their conversion. A crown upon the head cannot guard it from the attacks of insanity; nor a star on the bosom tranquillise the pulsation of a fever. Nothing which greatness and opulence afford, can delay the approach of death; that evil which it has pleased God *to bring upon all*

flesh, and which must be a peculiar evil to those who doat on the vanity of the world, and have no resources in religion, to comfort them on leaving it.

The toil of procuring great things, the uncertainty of succeeding in the pursuit, their unsubstantial, unsatisfactory nature, and their inability to soften, much less prevent disease and death, are sufficient to prove, that they were never intended by God to furnish the chief happiness of man, nor to become objects of his first wishes and most anxious pursuit.

But what, say you, is not the nature of man aspiring; and do not the strong suggestions of his heart teach him, that he was designed to reach at great things? There is certainly a natural desire of greatness in the mind of man, and it was not given for no other purpose, but to be controlled. It was given for admirable ends, and may be directed to their accomplishment, under the guidance of reason and religion.

Let us see, whether the text does not supply hints of instruction for the conduct of this natural propensity. *I will bring evil upon all flesh;* that is, upon the high as well as the low, *saith the Lord;* but it immediately follows as a source of consolation, *but thy life I will give thee, for a prey in all places whithersoever thou goest.* Under all circumstances, and in all situations, whether prosperous or adverse, elevated or depressed, thy life may still afford thee comfort; so that thou mayest rejoice in the possession, if thou knowest how to use it rightly, as a conqueror rejoices in the *prey* or spoil which he carries home from the field of battle.

The right conduct of life, then, and not the attainment of *great things,* of exalted posts in society, is the rational object of a wise Christian. *Great*

things are such as really contribute to sweeten life, to preserve it, to sanctify it, to render it approved by the giver, and preparatory to a better.

The mind of man, you say, is naturally aspiring. Here then is scope for its highest ambition. *Great things,* not such as the world deems great, but such as reason and religion place above all others, must be sought, and may be found, by every sincere Christian.

The conquest of passion is a great object. *And seekest thou great things for thyself?* Seek them not in worldly vanity; for reason has affirmed, that nothing is truly great, the contempt of which is great. Many men have been admired, and celebrated, for refusing honours and emoluments; a plain intimation that honours and emoluments are not in themselves great and glorious objects; for if they were, to despise them would not be deemed a mark of a great soul, but of a mean and groveling spirit. But no man was ever admired or celebrated for yielding to his passions. On the contrary, those who have subdued them in any signal instance, where the temptation was great, and the opportunities convenient, have been justly looked up to as the ornaments of human nature. Self-command gave them in the most indigent and unhonoured state, a superiority of character above the most illustrious in title, and the most opulent in fortune. *He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.*

To be able to resist the influence of fashionable example; to do right in the midst of an erring multitude; to be proof against the attacks of ridicule, this is truly great; and no man can show too anxious a solicitude for such preeminence. This is moral heroism, the triumph of reason, the victory of virtue.

Fortune has no share in it. It proceeds from principle and resolution, assisted by divine favour; and it forms a character happy and great in itself, and useful and instructive by its example. It may not be crowned with civil honours, it may not be applauded by shouting multitudes; but it must be secretly approved, even by those who externally insult it; and even if it should fail of the esteem of man, it will be honoured by him who made man, and by whom those kings and potentates reign, who assume to themselves the privilege of conferring titular honour and civil precedency. This is great; and they who pursue it have learned a lesson of wisdom unknown to those warriors, statesmen, and orators, who have shown an inclination to engross all property, all distinction, all power, and all authority.

To be able to dissipate the mist of prejudices formed against reason and religion; and to adopt and defend truth, when attacked by the wit, the learning, and the eloquence of infidel and haughty philosophers; this also is great, and worthy the aspirations of all who are rationally ambitious.

To bear disappointment, neglect, and ill-usage with patience; steadily proceeding in the path of virtue, notwithstanding the world neither applauds nor remunerates; but, on the contrary, may oppose, revile, and injure; this is truly great: and he who has really attained it, may be said to be above the world, not in the sense of a proud philosophy, but in the unassuming language of a meek religion.

All moral virtues, and all Christian graces, are certainly objects worthy of the wisest man's ambition. They are great indeed, adequate to the vast capacity of the human soul, and the only things which can give it complete and durable satisfaction.

We have already seen, that riches, honours, external advantages of all kinds, are incompetent to the removal or alleviation of disease, unable to dissipate the fear of death, or to afford comfort to the distressed mind at its approach. But this cannot be said in objection to those *great things* which are comprehended under the appellation of the moral virtues, and the Christian graces. They certainly possess a power of tranquillising the spirits under bodily sufferings, and, therefore, of becoming conducive to cure; but, at all events, they contribute more than any thing else to give patience under sufferings, because they inspire the cheerfulness of hope. If any thing can remove the reluctance with which life is resigned at the call of nature, it must be that dependence on divine Providence, which religion teaches; she who points to her votary, happiness beyond the grave. A death-bed shows us, in the most striking point of light, the difference between real and false grandeur. The pious peasant, fully believing the religion he was taught in his infancy, dies with cheerful resignation; while the rich and great, those who trust in their riches and greatness, submit to the necessity with an impious reluctance. Never having contemplated, or desired any thing greater than the wealth, rank, and opulence of the world, they have nothing to look up to, when wealth, rank, and opulence, are on the eve of departure. They would give them all, for the pious poor man's acquiescence and fortitude. For then the *great things* of the world pall on the mind, and are viewed with an antipathy, like that which children show to the playthings which, but a few minutes ago, they prized beyond measure.

It cannot be said with justice, that all that has been advanced against the pursuit of *great things*,

in the worldly sense of greatness, to the neglect of great things in the spiritual sense of that term, is merely the common-place declamation of an insincere rhetoric. Experience will, I think, set her seal to the truth of the whole; and if we really believe in the Gospel, we cannot entertain the least doubt concerning the reality of what has been premised. Many are the scriptural passages which might be cited, in proof that worldly riches and worldly grandeur are an impediment to *the one thing needful*, spiritual proficiency. Not that there can be conceived to be any crime in the mere possession of riches and honours; but they are of so seducing a nature, when sought with eagerness, and possessed with confidence in them, that they turn the attention from every thing that contributes to the welfare of the soul, from temperance, humility, piety, and charity.

The shortness of life is a common topic, and therefore little regarded. But if it were duly considered, it would lead to a right estimate of all external things. Let us consider those whom we have known most successful in the pursuit of *great things*, and who have left them behind them. How little a while did they enjoy them? Did they enjoy them at all? It is doubtful. For their health and senses were often impaired, before they obtained their long wished-for objects; and when they had obtained them, new ones started up, and urged them to new enterprises, even when they were tottering on the brink of the grave.

But the shortness of life is a circumstance which adds value to *great things* in a religious and philosophical sense. These render the little span as full of enjoyment, as the will of Providence has allowed it to be in its best state. These soothe the heart,

compose the temper, controul desire, afford contentment, and inspire patience, hope, and love.

And it is a circumstance much in favour of such *great things*, that they are attainable in the least fortunate conditions of life, in poverty, in obscurity, in exile. While God gives life, man may render it happy by seeking the blessing of God in the ways that he has been pleased to prescribe. *Thy life*, says he, in the words of the text, *will I give for a prey in all places, whither thou goest.* In all places, whether high or low, commodious or inconvenient, thy life is an inestimable treasure, which, by good conduct, thou mayest improve, so as to rejoice in the possession, as a military conqueror over the rich plunder of war. Health, innocence, and peace of mind, are the things which will give life its true relish, independently of riches and honours; and therefore are alone worthy of being deemed great things, adequate to thy desire and ample as thy capacity.

The great things of the world are bestowed by erring mortals, who can know but little of real desert; who are misguided by passion, prejudice, and self-interest; who are most inclined to favour that moderate degree of merit which does not excite their envy, or eclipse their own brilliancy; who are rather disposed to favour intellectual ability than moral goodness, and who seldom concern themselves with the religious improvements of those who court their patronage. But the great things which belong to a world superior to the present, are in the gift of one who knows what is in the heart of man, who values purity of principle and rectitude of intention, above the shining qualifications which attract the admiration of the multitude, and who gives his grace to the humble; to him who makes no figure in the

busy scene of ambition and avarice, but who, in the retirement of private life, does justice, loves mercy, and walks humbly with his God.

And, surely, this grace or favour of God, which, with invisible influence, acts on the human mind, and bestows a tranquillity and self-possession, which the world cannot give, which bestows it on the virtuous in all circumstances, whether prosperous or adverse; surely, I say, this grace or favour is the greatest object at which the heart of man can aspire. This is the *pearl of great price,* to purchase which a man would do well to part with all his possessions, if they were incompatible with it. But they are not incompatible. It is not required to part with our possessions to attain it; but with our immoderate desires, our too eager affections, our selfish avidity: those desires, those affections, and that avidity, which exclude an attention to all other things, to our best interest, to the attainment of God's favour, and a blessed immortality.

Set your affections therefore on things above, and not on things on the earth.

In order to love any object, it is necessary to think of it frequently. How shall they set their affections on things above, who seem to be immersed in things on the earth; who, like the brutes, fix their eyes only on the things before them, which gratify their appetites, and contribute only to animal support or enjoyment? Even they who rise higher, yet who acknowledge no other objects to be great, but such as conduce to worldly grandeur; who frequent courts and palaces, in the hope of obtaining titles, ribbons, stars, or offices of great emolument, dreaming of them by day and night, how can even they have room enough in their hearts for the love of him who will not suffer a rival, who has denominated himself a

jealous God, who probably abominates the idolatry of him who worships the vain things of the world, more than that of the poor Indian, who falls down before stocks and stones, in pious, though mistaken adoration.

Such is the tumult, noise, and precipitation of those who live in the scenes of fashionable pleasure, or of public and commercial employments, that many, it is to be feared, are prevented by them from enjoying the repose which is necessary to religious meditation. So far from seeking the *great things* which religion proposes, they scarcely think of them; they dare not speak of them, lest they should be derided as sanctimonious pretenders; they grow old, in a state of insensibility with respect to all that concerns the invisible things which belong unto their eternal peace; yet they profess themselves Christians, and are not inclined to believe themselves mistaken or deficient in assuming or completing that character.

How greatly is it to be wished, that the admonition of the preacher could speak effectually to their hearts, and awaken them from their slumbers; that he could turn their eyes, a little while at least, from the glittering prospect of gold and diamonds, of purple robes, and ermined coronets, to contemplate the riches of God's grace, and to consider the means which lead to a glorious preeminence in heaven?

And though preachers themselves should *seek the great things* of the world, yet let no man despise their advice, as the mere declamation of professional necessity. Let no man infer, from the failure of the adviser in the duties he may recommend, the futility of his advice. What the preacher teaches, equally concerns his hearers and himself to practise. He

ought, indeed, to set the example, as well as give the instruction. But if he is so unwise and unhappy as not to do so, let the hearer remember, that he alone is to answer for his own omission, and that his defect will neither be excused itself, nor tend to excuse the negligence of those who are committed to his pastoral care.

Seek not great things, the great things of this world, to the exclusion of those of another, is a prohibition that originates not in the preacher's mind, but in reason and in Scripture. We are all hastening to another state; and at the hour of departure we shall all wish that we had attended to the important concerns of a religious life. Let us do now, what we shall then wish we had done, and what will afford us comfort and pleasure, when all the delights of human grandeur and opulence shall be unable to furnish a momentary gratification.

Attentive to the *great things* which concern the state of our souls, we may also attend to the business of life, and be rewarded for our merits, or industry, either with riches and honours, or both, according to the decisions of those who are able to bestow them. Religion will sanctify our secular cares, and add a relish to the fruits of them. But let it never be forgotten by those who profess to be Christians, that, consistently with their profession, they must deem all things, however splendid and exalted in the eye of the mistaken votaries of worldly grandeur, far beneath the virtues, habits, and duties which contribute to secure, in this life, the GRACE OF GOD, and in a better, EVERLASTING FELICITY.

SERMON XXII.

ON THE DUTIES OF THE PREACHER AND THE HEARER.

2 CORINTHIANS, ii. 16.—*And who is sufficient for these things?*

THOUGH the Christian world is deplorably divided on the articles of the creed, yet it unites in some particulars of more importance than any contested opinions on topics merely doctrinal and speculative. All sects and all persuasions seem to allow the utility of periodical exhortations from the pulpit, to piety and to virtue. The voice of experience has long decided on the benefits derived to society, from this mode of religious instruction. Great good has certainly been produced by it, and much evil prevented: thousands, and tens of thousands, reclaimed from sin and misery: charities, for the relief of every evil which human endeavours can alleviate, instituted, supported, extended: religion cherished and diffused through all ranks; as it is a means of instruction open to all, without price, without solicitation, shining like the sun upon the poor and the abject, with no less warmth and light than on the great and powerful.

The establishment of a standing ministry, and of weekly instruction in certain districts throughout the kingdom, is a fine opportunity afforded by Providence for the improvement of civil society, and the instruction of human nature. Where the magistrate cannot reach, the preacher can penetrate, even to the recesses of the heart. Great is the undertaking,

and great has been the success of it in all ages of Christianity. The soldiers of Christ have fought a good fight; the olive branch their banner, the souls of their fellow-creatures their trophies, and heaven, we humbly hope, the reward of their victory.

But useful as is the institution, and honourable the office of the Christian preacher, it is also in a high degree difficult; and every one of us, however able and improved, may exclaim with the Apostle, *Who is sufficient for these things?*

Give me leave to enumerate, in a cursory manner, some of the requisites in a Christian preacher, not with an intention to arrogate too much to our office, but that, considering the difficulty of the work, you may learn to make due allowances for slight defects and involuntary failure. Let it be remembered, that *we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants, for Jesus Christ's sake.*

Theology has been termed by an old writer,* "the art of arts, the science of sciences; the queen of all other attainments, to which they do but administer, in a subordinate capacity."

But, *if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch,* saith our Saviour. He therefore who completely supports the character of a parish priest and a Christian orator, must unite in himself, natural abilities of the first rate, and acquirements of the highest value. He must possess inborn endowments, the gifts of God, improved by a most comprehensive education. To these he must add the study of the languages and sciences, great reading, mature reflection in silence and solitude, accurate observation of men and manners in active life, a knowledge of the heart and the effects of the passions: a perspicuous,

* Nazianzen

if not a graceful style; a command of language, powers of oratory, both bodily and mental, a love of his profession; above all, a warm and lively sense of devotion, of piety to God, and charity to man.

But, if all these accomplishments are necessary, what mortal but must shrink from the arduous employment, and exclaim with the Apostle, *Who is sufficient for these things?*

Human nature, in the general idea of it, we are all ready to acknowledge, is weak. Pastors of the church cannot be supposed by any reasonable man, exempt from the common infirmity. The powers of the understanding are bestowed in various degrees, limited in all, liable to decay, to lapses, to errors, where they are bestowed by nature in the greatest vigour, and confirmed by every attainable auxiliary of art. The will is depraved in the best of men. Strong passions usually accompany strong powers. The love of pleasure operates most intensely on the warmest imagination; and a great degree of irritability always attends that fine organization of the nerves, which accompanies great genius, and too often renders this noble distinction a real misfortune. Ill health, indisposition of mind, seasons of unaccountable languor and inactivity, often deaden the energies of the understanding, cloud the splendour of genius, and render learning an unwieldy mass of useless and indigested materials.

When we thus contemplate the greatness of the work, and the imbecility of the workman, we cannot but feel a deep sense of humiliation. We might, indeed, sink into despair, if we did not discover fountains of hope issuing from two different sources; from the GRACE of heaven, and the favourable propensities of a pious and benevolent audience. Persuasion, indeed, depends no less on the disposition

of the hearer, than the skill of the preacher; and the art of hearing with improvement, requires to be studied no less assiduously than the art of speaking with power and authority. "You think, very justly," says a great prelate, "that a great deal is incumbent upon us; but do you consider with equal attention, what is incumbent on yourselves?"

It is the duty of the hearers to enter the church with minds open to conviction, divested of pride, self-conceit, and all personal prejudices against the instructor. It is their duty to approach the altar, not as critics assembled in the schools to judge the literary merit of a composition, or to mark with censorious rigour the defects of delivery.

It should indeed be considered by those, who sit before us as our critical judges, instead of our disciples, that those passages of a discourse which may not be adapted to one part of our audience, may to another; that what may be disregarded by the learned and polite, may be improving to the poor and the uneducated; and that what may be too refined for the ignorant, may afford pleasure and instruction to the well-informed. The preacher must be unfortunately incapable indeed, by whom every individual of his audience is too wise to be instructed, and too good to be reformed.

The instructor who does not enlighten the understanding, may refresh the memory, or at least alarm the conscience. Is there any man who, in a large congregation, has no need to learn from this place, whoever stands in it, something he did not know before, to be reminded of something which he had forgotten, to be excited to something which he neglects, to be dissuaded from something which he pursues with imprudence and unreasonable ardour? Let the conscience of every man answer the question.

Instead of despising or degrading your teacher; profit by his instruction, supply what is wanting, add strength to what is weak in him, pass lightly over his imperfections, remembering your own; nor come as the Scribes and Pharisees came to our Saviour's discourses, not to gain improvement, but to *entangle us in our talk.* Neither lie in wait to detect us in a failure, like some noxious insect, which has a power of sucking poison from the most fragrant, wholesome, and beautiful flower. It is the hearer's principal duty, not to lift up their eyes to the pulpit with severity, but their hearts to heaven with humiliation, and to pray for spiritual grace; for, indeed, to be a successful hearer, something must be infused by the Holy Spirit. Before we can apprehend sacred things clearly, or desire them with ardour, the Spirit of God must spiritualize our understanding, and sanctify our hearts. A ray darted from the realms of light, must illuminate our bosoms, and be our guide to the Holy of Holies. The natural man has no relish for the things which are spiritually discerned. The cion of spiritual grace must be grafted on the wild stock of nature.

With this aid, with this luminary shining on our minds, the preacher, however, from human infirmity, insufficient, shall be enabled to guide our feet into the pleasant paths which lead to peace. The grace of God must assist both the hearer and the preacher, to render the ministry of the word effectual. Then shall our weakness become strength; our poverty, riches; our darkness, noon-day splendour. The treasure of the Gospel is indeed preserved *in earthen vessels;* but the intrinsic value is not diminished by the fragility or meanness of the repository. The diamond may subsist in all its brilliancy, and retain all its solidity, though concealed by a temporary

incrustation. The *pearl of great price,* though set by a clumsy hand, and in an awkward manner, yet loses neither its intrinsic value, nor its natural beauty. The eye of faith will penetrate the veil, and see the sun shining gloriously behind the clouds of human imbecility.

The more defects in the preacher, the more care is requisite in the hearer. To you then, we, whom our lot in life, or the Providence of God, has constituted pastors and ministers of the Gospel, to you we apply for the co-operation necessary to give success to our labours. It is not the language of affectation, but of unaffected humility, when we declare ourselves insufficient for these things without your assistance. *Take heed how you hear,** was the command of our Saviour himself; and it is a duty no less strictly required of you, than it is of us, to take heed how we preach.

It is the first care of the good husbandman, to render the ground fit for the reception of the seed. Permit me then to prepare your minds for instruction, by offering a few suggestions on the duty of a pious and well-disposed hearer.

In the first place, the heart should be prepared by prayer and meditation on the Sunday morning previously to entering the sanctuary. To rush into the more immediate presence of God with the same heedlessness that you enter a tavern or a theatre, is a great indecency; and argues a levity of mind, incompatible with devotional sentiment.

In the next place, *take especial heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.* Faith is no less necessary to qualify you for an entrance into this holy place, than the wedding garment for the nuptial festivity. You have probably

* Luke, viii. 18.

been educated in the faith. Let no seducing books, no petulant conversation of half-learned and conceited companions, lead you to renounce a religion in which your forefathers lived and died in peace. Can any evil arise to you from believing? but if there be but a bare possibility that Christianity may be true, think what may be the consequences of a presumptuous rejection of its promises, and an audacious defiance of its terrible denunciations! Every thing may be lost by unbelief, and what can be gained but an emancipation from salutary restraint, from a controuling power, which keeps us from hurting our health, our reputation, our peace? Nothing the preacher can advance, will have any effect on your minds, if you are deficient in this prime requisite of a hearer, *faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.* No wonder if his words are, to the unbeliever, as *a sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal.*

The Apostle says, "*The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*" But be it remembered, that we are told in the Scripture, *that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*—Therefore, *hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.*

Let no one enter a church with those dispositions or intentions with which he enters a gay assembly, convened for the display of personal decoration. Let no one enter a place dedicated by human and divine laws to sacred things, from motives of mere curiosity, to hear a trial of skill in rhetoric, or for the amusement of a vacant hour. The spirit of criticism is essentially different from the spirit of devotion. The critic and the Christian are often distinct characters. *Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.*

He who comes merely with a view to be pleased, will think little of being profited. He who comes merely because he is idle, will probably slumber on his seat; and as he entered with carelessness, will remain with impatience, and depart with indifference. *Ye are idle, ye are idle,* said Pharaoh to the Israelites, *therefore, ye say, let us go, and do sacrifice unto the Lord.* After noticing the text, and marking the time, he will fold his hands together, compose himself in the arms of gentle dulness, count the slow minutes till the close of the discourse; then having yawned, and measured the length of the sermon with the accuracy of an astronomical observer, hasten away with looks of unmeaning satisfaction; though all that has been said has been like sweet melody to *the deaf adder.* He cannot watch one hour. He minds little at the time, reflects less afterwards, and continues exactly the same man he was before, though life and death are the issue. Like *Gallio,* he *cares for none of these things;* and his attendance at church, if his behaviour there did not arise rather from folly than guilty intention, might be termed a blasphemous mockery of the Almighty.

Even pious and well-disposed persons are but too apt to behave with an apparent inattention, which though it arises not from corruption of principle, but from mere thoughtlessness, and perhaps the gaiety of innocence, yet produces on themselves a bad effect, by gradually superinducing a disregard for sacred ordinances; and on others, by the influence of example. Affected gestures, unnecessary whispers, occasional laughter, unmeaning ceremonies, and an apparent indifference of deportment, are wrong in themselves, give offence to the more devout, and tend to defeat the beneficial purposes of the whole institution. The strict decency of the sectaries in

their places of worship, preserves a spirit of devotion among them, and should stimulate the sons of the church to afford a better example.

It has been justly observed, that not a few have been engaged so deeply in the observation of what they see at church, that they have no room left for taking notice of what they hear. As to the sermon, they are in the habit of thinking it something of course to be said, and not to be minded. When such persons have decorated themselves in the most whimsical, or gayest apparel, attracted notice, seen and been seen, it is enough;—*Now, Lord, let thy servant depart in peace;*—they leave piety and devotion to the minister, or any of their neighbours. An assembly room would have served their intentions better than the church. Vanity is their idol; and they fall down and worship it *in the temple of the living God,* like the idolators of the golden image.

And this reminds me of a very necessary caution to those who are, in other respects, sufficiently willing to obey the command,—*Take heed how you hear.* Let them avoid that common, but most unjust and uncharitable practice, of applying the observations of the pulpit to their neighbours, to particular persons, whom the preacher perhaps never had in view, and if he had, ought not to stigmatize in pointed and particular language; for though he hates their faults, he must love their persons, and seek their peace. He is commanded, indeed, to rebuke with all authority, but not to satirize with personal malice, and render those whose consciences he probes, objects of public censure. The minister who preaches *at* particular persons, as it is called, is guilty of a great offence to God and man. He takes an unmanly advantage of his consecrated situation, to gratify his own malignity. Whatever he so says, may justly raise dis-

pleasure in the party pointed out, but can never promote his reformation. But, on the other hand, let it be considered, that it is impossible to preach of virtues and vices, without sometimes drawing such characters as the censorious may apply to their neighbours, or some noxious individual. The pictures he paints could not be well delineated, if they resembled nobody. They are not drawn as portraits; but they must be pictures of human nature, or they will be drawn to no purpose. But beware of applying to particulars, what is only intended as a general representation; beware of finding out meanings never meant, and making piety a cloak for malice. I exhort you to apply whatever strikes you, to yourselves. Say rather, *Lord, is it I?* and leave your neighbour to his God and his conscience. To come to church to gratify spleen and resentment, is to add hypocrisy to malice. Piety without charity, is an offensive sacrifice, all rank and foul as a putrid victim on an altar, and ascends to heaven in fumes of an evil savour.

I will not proceed on this topic. You must see by this time, the great necessity of that precept, *Take heed how you hear;* and that the duties of the hearer as well as of the preacher, are urgent, numerous, and indispensable. Be careful to practise them, and you will greatly alleviate the burden of your minister, and enable him to do you good. Though he may not be sufficient for these things alone, yet, with your co-operation, and the divine blessing, he may contribute, as an humble instrument, weak though he be, to the comfort of your lives at present, to a resigned death, to a happy immortality.

Great objects these, a noble enterprise! Alas! *Who is sufficient for these things?* We ask the question with a sigh, and a deep sense of our own

imperfections. Yet will we not sit down in indolence, doing nothing because we cannot do all that we desire. No; let us gird up the loins of our mind, do the best in our power, and trust for the result to him who, *out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, has ordained strength.* Let us endeavour, by persuasive exhortations and sound doctrine, to train the young to virtue, to afford the old and the afflicted the consolations of Christianity, to promote charity and good-will among all. Be this our task. And if we bring an honest and sincere mind to the performance of it, God will accept it; you will accept it; you will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss, but will extend that indulgence, which each of you wish in the performance of your several duties in the station to which Providence has called you, to your religious instructor. You will consider that he is but a man. Expect him not to be a God. Be satisfied, if, human errors excepted, he is a faithful, a zealous minister to you, for the greatest good to which your wishes can aspire. In the most despicable sermon, an humble mind may find something to exercise its charity and its patience, if not to excite its zeal, and improve its knowledge.

Whoever then is appointed to be your instructor, examine whether you do the duty of a hearer, before you censure the failure of the preacher.

Say to yourselves in your meditations on the doctrine received from this place on your departure, How have I this day spent the few hours which God has allotted me for the purpose of moral and religious improvement? Like my neighbours, and in compliance with the laws and customs of my country, I repaired to the church. If there is any meaning in human actions, I went to pray, to return thanks, and to be instructed in my duty. Was I humble? Was

I warmed with charity to man, and piety to God? Did I hunger and thirst after righteousness? Did I forgive, as I hope to be forgiven? Was I attentive to the preacher, not merely as a critic of his performance, but as a critic of my own life, my own defects, and the most probable means of improving? Was I dull, careless, thoughtless, absent, vain, censorious, inclined to scoff at all religion, and to cavil at the difficult passages of the Scriptures, and the doctrines delivered from the pulpit? Have I only complied with a decent custom? Did I go to display my personal ornaments, to be entertained or amused, and to pass away an idle hour? Did I think the offices tedious? Did I apply what was said in general, to my neighbours in particular; secretly rejoicing, that one whom I hate, might be mortified by the reflections of the preacher? If so, is my conduct to be reconciled to reason, to benevolence, to a regard to my own happiness, and the happiness of my neighbour? I have not hitherto duly considered the duties of the hearer; but, if I go to church with such behaviour and such dispositions, I am so far from doing a meritorious action, that I am aggravating my sins, offending my neighbour, and provoking, most justly, God's wrath and indignation against me. I will henceforth take heed to my ways. I will remember that it was our Saviour himself who spoke as never man spoke, and not merely the preacher, who said, "*Take heed how you hear.*" Even when our Saviour preached, I see it was necessary that his hearers should be taught to *take heed how they hear*, in order to render even his discourses efficacious. In future I will take care to put on, with my best apparel, my best dispositions; to be *clothed with righteousness*, a more becoming and beautiful dress for the church, than the most costly and splendid

garments. Yes, O God, I will fall before thee in thine house, prostrating my soul, forgetting a while the world and its vanities, and clinging to thee as my support and comfort, when my *feet shall stumble on the dark mountains*, and in all the changes and chances of this mortal life. Whoever is the preacher, and whatever the doctrine, I will not be wanting to myself, a fallen, sinful, undeserving creature as I am, who may lose my senses and my life in a moment, and who have need of every help to keep me from deplorable depravity and misery unutterable!

If thus you argue with yourself, you will go home with a blessing on your head, and probably find all your days sweetly tranquillised by the devout exercise of your Sundays. It was an observation of the learned Judge Hales, an able lawyer, in a profession not much addicted to superstition, "that he found the success and happiness of the ensuing week, greatly depend on the manner in which he spent his Sunday."

But, if the ministerial office is able to contribute to your happiness, surely those who exercise it, notwithstanding an insufficiency arising from infirmity, are worthy of your esteem for *their works sake.* Yes; we seek your esteem. We are not ashamed to avow that ambition. We seek your esteem; not indeed from vanity, but that our instructions may be more efficacious, our doctrine more acceptable. Popularity is only so far to be desired, as it renders the ministry of him, who is so happy as to enjoy it, more beneficial. It is often in itself a snare to its possessor, and in the present state of the church it certainly leads not to lucrative advantage. It is, however, an instrument of great good, and therefore much to be valued, if it comes uncourted by sinister

arts, and mean compliances with unreasonable demands.

Let me conclude with reminding you after all, that the hearing of sermons is no virtue in itself, but merely an auxiliary duty. Let us therefore be, as the Apostle desires, *doers of the word, and not hearers only; deceiving ourselves.* The words of Ezekiel may not be inapplicable to this occasion. *Son of man,* says he, *the children of thy people still are talking of thee by the walls, and within the doors of the houses; and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord.*

And they come unto thee, and they sit before thee as my people; and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after covetousness.

And lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

Thus you recollect, that though pleasure may be made the vehicle of instruction, yet it must not be the end in which we are to acquiesce. The salutary draught may be sweetened, the health-restoring pill may be gilded; but if we take nothing but the syrup and the gilding, our eye or our palate may be pleased, while our disease remains uncured. Come with an honest and upright heart, and a sincere desire, not of being amused only, but of learning, in order to practise, your duty; and then, however mean the performance or the performer, you will not depart without a blessing. God will open your ears, illuminate your understandings, and direct your inclinations to the things which belong unto your peace.

It evidently appears then, that both hearer and preacher may justly exclaim, when they duly consider their duties, *Who is sufficient for these things?* What remains, but that they supplicate the God of mercies to supply their defects, to accept, after their earnest endeavours, the will for the deed, and to let his mercy receive, what his justice might reject and condemn.

Let us all, both hearers and preachers, remember with comfort, *that though we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, yet our sufficiency is of God,* who, in "all our works begun, continued, and ended in him, will assist us with his most gracious favour; that we may glorify his most holy name, and finally obtain everlasting salvation."

SERMON XXIII.*

ON THE BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM THE SIGHT OF A FUNERAL.

PSALM cii. 23.—*He brought down my strength in my journey, and shortened my days.*—

IT was the particular manner of our blessed Saviour, when he had assembled the multitude, to derive topics of moral instruction from the objects which were immediately before him, and which unavoidably obtruded themselves on the eyes of his audience.

It was the spring season, when he gave them the sermon on the mount. Observe it, and you will find almost all the allusions are to things which, at that time, and from that place, a mount, offered them-

* Preached at Tunbridge, on the death of a poor woman, the wife of a carrier, who was taken ill on one of her journies, and died soon after.

selves to his view, and to the notice of those whom he addressed.

Thus when he taught them to trust in God, he bade them behold the fowls of the air, which were then gaily on the wing, or melodiously chanting their carols around them, fed by divine Providence, though they did not sow, nor reap, like the husbandmen, who were probably sowing their fields in his sight at that moment. He desired them to notice the lilies, that is, all the gay flowers of the field, which were then blooming around them in the meadows, and were so beautifully clothed by the Almighty; and yet *toiled not*, like the labourers in the field, who were then busy in their vernal husbandry. You will find, in like manner, that on whatever subject he discoursed, he attended to the prospect immediately before him, or to the profession and circumstances of those who heard him. Thus were his instructions better attended to; they became lively and picturesque; they entertained while they improved, and they had nothing of the dull manner of a formal harangue.

In humble imitation of our blessed Saviour, the ministers of the Gospel endeavour to instruct their hearers from the passing scene. A funeral is one of those spectacles which cannot fail to afford a striking lesson. Look at that coffin, in which are deposited the poor remains of a human being. Pause, and reflect. It affords a sermon of itself, and, to a thinking mind, renders the admonitions of the pulpit entirely superfluous.

Yet the affectionate regard of surviving relations requires, on the occasion, a discourse from the pulpit. It is a wish that does honour to the filial piety of those who entertain it. And it is the rather complied with, as it affords an opportunity of conveying

some instruction, which might not rise spontaneously in the minds of those who, from various motives, attend in crowds this funeral ceremony.

You who know the circumstances of the last illness which brought our departed sister to her end, will not be at a loss to account for the choice of my text. *He brought down my strength in my journey, and shortened my days.* The cold hand of death first caught hold of her in one of those journies which she usually took, with her industrious partner, to gain an honest maintenance. Death grasped her on her journey, nor let her go again till he had gained dominion over her; brought her in triumph, as you now see, and placed her on that bier, in her passage to his empire, the grave.

I find not any thing particularly calamitous, or singularly remarkable, in the circumstances of her dissolution. She had arrived at a good old age. She is going to her grave, as Job beautifully expresses it, "*in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in its season.*" Her disease was not long, or peculiarly painful. She lived esteemed in her sphere for industry and sobriety, and she died with a character unimpeached.

In a series of three-score years and ten, I find her name free from any stain; and silence, in a censorious age, is praise. To have been a good wife, is surely a most honourable character.

Far be it from me, to prostitute the pulpit to indiscriminate praise. I shall not attempt to deck a plain character in the gaudy colours of rhetoric. To her cold ear, praise and dispraise are alike indifferent. Exaggerated and extravagant encomiums cannot be agreeable to her relatives. She is before the tribunal of her God. There let us hope and pray, that she will receive the reward which we have

reason to think will be bestowed on industry, honesty, sobriety, and all the unostentatious virtues of humble life.

Be it our wisdom to derive advantage from all *such* scenes as this; not only from this, for there is nothing particularly to be remarked in it, but from the sight of every burial train which slowly paces up the churchyard-way.

All require to be admonished of what all allow to be true. Every man living knows that he shall die; but many live as if they were assured that they should never die. The truth is so familiar, it ceases to affect. Our inattention becomes a habit; some striking image is necessary to rouse us. Such surely is the dead body of one we lately knew alive, just going to be put into the dark, cold, and solitary grave, where the tongue that now speaks, and the ear that now hears, must shortly moulder and decay. Think of these sad scenes and sombrous prospects, and let a way be opened to the heart, through the imagination.

Be assured, that sentence is already passed upon every one of us. Though the execution is a little delayed by the mercy of the dread sovereign; yet the sentence irrevocable is passed on us all. *It is appointed unto man once to die.*

I observe many attend the corpse. It is not uncharitable to suppose, that some at least are influenced by motives of mere curiosity. They come to see a sight, to hear the dirge, to be amused, to pass away an idle interval. They look on the main business of the meeting totally unaffected, totally regardless of the common lot of humanity. They view the pall and the coffin with the same vacant stare, as they would behold a pageant or procession at the theatre. They view it as if it did not concern

them, any farther than as the sight passes away a few minutes of leisure. The carelessness of their looks seems to say, What is this to me?

But let not such fine opportunities for improvement in every virtue be lost to you. Compose your minds to seriousness, and let the scene make its genuine and natural impression. That poor pale corpse, with a shroud upon it, that lies screwed up in the narrow coffin, cold, stiff, and motionless, little more than a week ago breathed, eat, drank, walked about, performed all the offices requisite in its station; felt the warm vernal sun; saw the blossoms open that promised a fruitful year; went forth cheerful in the morning to an useful employment, journeying in all the ease of contented industry, thinking to return in health and comfort, and sit over the little blazing hearth, and enumerate the profits, or discourse of the events of the journey with its partner; *but God brought down its strength on its journey and shortened its days.* And there it lies, after a very few days illness, differing only in appearance from the clay and dust with which, after the worms have rioted on it, it will at last mingle, and be no more distinguished.

And now let the youngest, the healthiest, the gayest among us all, say, whether it is not possible, that in the very next journey he shall go, the very next undertaking he shall engage in, *God may bring down his strength in his journey, and shorten his days.* He may set out in the morning, rejoicing as the lark to soar and sing, and he may be brought home in the evening a lifeless corpse. And shall he stand round that pall, and stoop and look into yonder grave, and see the sculls and bones of those that were a few years past as gay and happy as himself, and say, What is this to me? I am young and strong, and

have many years to live. Shall he not rather lay his hand on his pensive bosom, and say, Soon, very soon, a solemnity similar to this with which I am now carelessly diverted, shall be held for me. Yes, the earth over which I run with careless feet to see this sight, shall yawn, open her greedy mouth, and swallow me up. I may be next week pent up within a few boards, brought into the church, and gazed at for a few minutes, by mortals as unthinking as I should have been without this admonition. God can bring *down my strength in the journey of life* at first setting out in the morning, and shorten my days in my early youth. I will therefore *take heed to my ways.* I will go home thoughtful, and on my pillow consider my life and conversation; correct what is wrong, and make resolutions for the regulation of my future behaviour; and then shall I live in comfort and security, and when it shall please the Giver of life to take it away, then shall I die in peace. And then shall I be glad, and rejoice that I improved this scene; that, when I was hurried on with a crowd to see a funeral, I was led by it to a most important means of grace.

But since that dumb mouth is capable of giving us lessons so serious, and in so eloquent and persuasive a manner, let us not yet leave it. In imagination I will draw aside the pall, and lift up the lid of the coffin. Nay, fair maiden, that art looking on, start not back with horror. To this thou must come, though thy cheeks are now like the vermil rose. Thirty or forty years ago, that scull now covered with grey locks, and adorned with a shroud, had comely tresses like thine own, and was decked out in as gay attire; those sunken hollow sockets were filled with eyes that shone perhaps as bright as thine; those emaciated fallen cheeks were no less ruddy

and pleasing than thine; those pale lips smiled as agreeably, and that tongue, now silent, talked as fluently as thine! Only a few days ago, those hands were active in laudable industry, and those feet were able to move in the duties of the good housewife!

And canst thou come here only to while away the time in gazing at an empty spectacle, while so much instruction may be derived from it? Hence you may learn to value something besides external ornament and external appearance; besides, as the Apostle says, "*the plaiting the hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel; the hidden man of the heart is that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.*" Hence you may learn to value a good honest heart, an active mind and body, and all the useful qualities of a good mother, a good wife, a good mistress of a family, above the showy graces which frequently lead to nothing but vanity, vice, and misery. Look at that form, and see in it, as in a mirror, thine own at some future day, perhaps an early day. Such a sight is well adapted to fix your roving, volatile, thoughtless minds, and cause you to value the things that are useful in life, above those that are only showy, glossy, and unsubstantial.

When you go home and lie down on your pillow, you will consider, that the bed on which you sleep so softly and so comfortably, may soon be your death-bed, on which you may be stretched a cold corpse, confined in a coffin, and then removed into a dark, damp, lonely, desolate hole in the earth! And why should you think of these things? Merely to make you melancholy? By no means, but to make you serious, thoughtful, and considerate; that you may apply your hearts unto wisdom, live an useful life, be an honour and comfort to your friends while

you live; and when you die, die with hope and in perfect peace with God, with man, and with your own conscience.

"But before we take leave of the corpse, and bid a last adieu to our dear sister, whom many of us have known so many years; before we put on the lid of the coffin, and draw the pall over it, let me invite you all, without distinction, young and old, rich and poor, to look on and learn a lesson. Death, indeed, is common, and funerals are common; and because they are common, it may be, you have neglected to pay them that attention which, as those that must die, and be buried, you might be expected to pay. I do not wish you to be always gloomy; but sometimes it is highly salutary to go to the house of mourning, and to be conversant with death, and all its sable scenes. Let this half hour be spent to your souls' improvement. There is time enough for gaiety, time enough for pleasure, time enough for business. "There is," says the wise man, "a time for every thing;" and surely the time spent at a funeral, should be spent in thoughts suitable to the occasion; and let us remember, that there is a sadness by which the heart is made better, there is a sorrow that worketh joy.

Ye rich, if any such are here, on you I call. Look at your sister. Be not too proud to acknowledge the relation. She indeed was not rich; but despise her not. Riches would do her no good now; and very shortly you shall lie on that very bier, in this very aisle, and your riches shall avail you as little. You may, indeed, have a more splendid coffin; but you will be as cold, as insensible to the splendour of the nails and the handles and the plates, as she. The rich man also, we read, died, and was buried; and Lazarus was as well accommodated in the grave;

though perhaps not attended thither with so much purchased pomp, and all the affectation of venal sorrow. *Here high and low, rich and poor, meet together; for the Lord is the maker and destroyer of them all.* Since the great leveller makes us all equal, learn hence to subdue your pride; learn charity as well as humility; and remember, that what you give away, that only will you carry with you, when you are stretched in your coffin, and tarry a few minutes here in your way to the tomb, and to the country whence no traveller returns.

Ye poor, of whom there is always a numerous train, approach, and look into the coffin. This poor woman was a pattern of contented industry, and kept herself from distress by unwearied labour. By night and by day, in wet and in cold, she regularly went through the business of her occupation. She lived respected, in consequence of it; and now she is dead, you see how her remains are honoured. If you are disposed to complain of your situation, see there an assurance that your grievances cannot last long. Death is a safe retreat for the wretched. Many a time has she been as weary as you, but now she is at rest. *There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there; and the servant is free from the master.* Death hath no respect of persons; he knocks at the door of the great man's mansion house, with as little ceremony and as great violence, as at the thatched cottage of the pauper.

Ye old, be not afraid to view your aged sister, whose day is closed; and see to what you must shortly come; for your day is far spent, and your night at hand. Peradventure you are racked with

pain. There you observe pain no more. The stone, the gout, the asthma, the fever, the palsy, those harbingers of death, enter not the coffin. Perhaps you find it difficult to earn a livelihood by your labour. See there a home, where they *neither hunger any more, neither thirst any more.*

Thus one generation passeth away, and another cometh. It was always so; your fathers made way for you, and you must soon depart to leave a place for a rising train, who, in their turns, must all follow you to their long home. Learn resignation; learn to submit with decency, and seek comfort in the decays of nature by the growth of grace.

Set thine house in order, reverend father, whose hoary head shakes; for thou must shortly die, and not live. *God has brought down thy strength in thy journey.* But after descending into the grave, and going through the gates of death, thou shalt emerge and flourish in immortal youth. Thy grey hairs are an ornament, if they be found in the way of wisdom.

Ye young, ye who are but children in age, and who are attracted hither by the desire of seeing a sight, go to the side of the coffin, look in, and learn a lesson for your lives. Death you have never considered seriously. It seems at present to be something in which you have no concern. But a few years ago, comparatively speaking, and that pale corpse was as one of you, young, blithe, and active; and but a few years, or a few hours hence, you may be as she, cold, lifeless, a corpse. Learn wisdom from the solemn scene. Can you, at your age of sensibility, hear the clods of earth falling with a hollow murmur on the coffin, and not feel a pulsation? do they not knock at the door of your heart? Can you hear the ropes grate against the coffin as it goes down into the grave, and not receive a deep impres-

sion? Whatever gives you a good idea, value and cherish. It is never too early to be wise. The bud is as often blasted, and falls from the tree, as the mature fruit. Many a flower is cropt before it is full blown. The scythe sweeps down the opening cowslip, as well as the mature, expanded poppy. *Man cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower.* It is probable that not half of you will reach the age of our departed sister; it is probable that a very great portion of you will disappear, in a very few years, from the face of the earth; like the snow-drop and primrose at the advance of spring and the approach of summer. Death hangs over you in youth as well as age, like a sword suspended by a single hair. How many are gone in the year that is past, that entered upon it as full of life and hope as you? Say not with the ungodly, represented in the book of Wisdom, as reasoning with themselves, but not aright, *Our life is short and tedious, and in the death of a man there is no remedy. We are born at all adventure, and we shall be hereafter as though we had never been; for the breath of our nostrils is as smoke, and a little spark in the moving of the heart, which being extinguished, our body shall be turned into ashes, and our spirits shall vanish as the soft air. Come on, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures like as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointment, and let no flower of the spring pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they be withered. Let none of us go without his part of voluptuousness, for this is our portion, and our lot is this.* Say not so, *but learn to remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil day comes, and thy feet stumble on the dark mountains.*

And now let us close the coffin, bid an everlasting farewell to that face, which we shall never see any more, and turn a moment to the train of affectionate mourners. Weep on. Grief is itself a medicine. It is nature opens the floodgates of the eyes, and gives the relief she wants. The heart is eased by the effusion of tears. But O, weep not as those that weep without hope. *I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren,* says the Apostle, *concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so also them that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.* Let this event make a due impression upon you. It will wear off sufficiently soon, in the concerns of a busy world; but for your own sakes, let religious hope blend itself with your pious sorrow: hope, I mean, of a resurrection, and a happy immortality, both for your lost relative and for yourselves; that you may meet again in a better state and purified bodies, and be happier together than ever you were before; happy for ever and ever in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. *And he said unto me, can these bones live? and I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest.**

And now what remains? We have endeavoured to profit by the scene before us, by the lifeless corpse presented to our view, as anatomists dissect the dead for the benefit of the living. Pardon us, thou relique of what once was woman, pardon this liberty; but I need not ask it. Thy spirit, if it hover over these scenes, must approve and rejoice, that even when dead, thou art made to speak, and promote the happiness of thy kinsfolk and neighbours, by affording them a striking lesson on their own mortality.

But the sand of the hour-glass flows swiftly away,

* Ezekiel, xxxvii. 3.

and reminds us of our duty to attend thee to the repository of the dead, where thy mother earth has opened her arms to take thee to her bosom. Farewell, farewell for ever. Yes; we shall follow thee now with our feet, and soon we shall follow thee borne like thee, on the feet of others. Many of us have had warnings already. One is deaf, another lame, a third nearly blind. The grey hairs, the wrinkles, the pale, emaciated, yellow cheeks, demonstrate, that death is pulling many of us down to his domain, to his dark realms in the caverns of the vaulted charnel-house. Yes; we shall all follow thee in a few years. Thou hast only set out on thy journey a little before us. Be it ours to be ready according to thy example, in life and death, whenever the hour appointed for setting out on our journey shall arrive.

As I hinted before, we have warnings sufficient within us as well as without us. The seeds of death are in us all. Daily food and nightly rest recruit us from time to time, but the hour will come, when we shall have no appetite for food, and when we shall not be able to rest; when we shall count the long watches of the night, and turn from side to side weary of ourselves. The pillars will be gradually taken away, and the building must fall. "Life itself," it has been justly said, "is but a reprieve from death."* "Our bodies are indeed most curiously formed, but they are still but dust; as the finest and most beautifully painted china is but clay."

Since life is brittle as glass, and slender as the spider's most attenuated thread, shall we live on from year to year, and depend on the continuance of life, and hear the bell toll, and see the funeral procession, and look down into the grave, and think, that none of these things concern us? No; every

* Burnet.

time the bell flings out its slow and solemn sound, a serious thought should arise in our hearts; not indeed a panic fear, an unmanly timidity, but a serious thought, that the very next time it sounds, it may sound for us, or those whom we love as our own souls. Thoughtlessness is more frequently the cause of our ruin, than intentional wickedness; and the church has wisely instituted the solemnity of funeral ceremonies, the tolling of the bell, and the other mournful rites, in order to impress a seriousness on the minds of those who must shortly be in the same condition with the dead body that passes by our door in its last journey; its journey to the church-yard, or the damp vault, where corruption sits victoriously on her mouldy throne, and the very worm we tread upon, triumphs over the proud lord of the creation.

O, let me conjure you, by all that is dear to you, by the regard that you entertain for your own souls, not to suffer such solemnities to be neglected by you, or attended merely as amusing spectacles! Endeavour to receive a deep impression from them; such as may give strength to your reason during the residue of your lives, and assist you in regulating the disorders of your fancy and your passions, the sources of all human misery.

The heart is apt to be strangely hardened by long commerce with the world, by indolence, by thoughtlessness, by luxury and sensuality, against all tender sentiments, and all religious impressions. But endeavour to open them to such scenes as this, by dwelling upon them with attention, by making the case before you your own, or that of your dearest friend or relation. Suppose, in order to impress the image the deeper, your own tender father, the mother that dandled you in her arms, the infant, the child whom you have delighted in, suppose yourself in that

coffin, with your face adorned with that mockery of human ornament, a pinked shroud; and above all, pray to God to soften your bosom by the influence of his grace, that he may be enabled to convert the funeral of your neighbour into a means of grace; that ye may learn from it, at least, *in this your day, the things that belong unto your peace, before they be hid from your eyes for ever.*

And now the day is far spent, and the evening shades descend; and soon after we return from the church and the brink of the grave, we shall probably retire to our chambers, shut out the world, and prepare to throw ourselves into the arms of that image of death, sleep; but before we close our eyes, let us endeavour to impress upon our minds, by prayer and meditation, a just idea of human life, its shortness, its misery, and its want of divine assistance. And let not the impression be transient or momentary. But when we rise again in the morning, let us go forth to our various employments, resolved to walk worthy of our Christian vocation; *our loins girded, and our lights burning,* not knowing *but our Lord and master may call us,* (before we return again to our slumbers in bed,) to our slumbers in the grave, out of which we shall not be awakened till the last trump. A thousand disorders within, and accidents without, may bring us to our long home, before we approach the good old age of our sister who lies dead before us. Small is the number that reaches so good an old age.

But we have dwelt long enough on the dark and shadowy prospect. Brighter scenes invite. I see the clouds divide, and a glorious light beaming from the fountain of all happiness. Vanish, thou king of terrors, with all thy mournful train. See life and immortality dawning on the grave. How beautiful

upon the mountains, are the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings! *Jesus Christ has risen, and overcome death, and we also shall arise and subdue our last grand enemy.*

Yes, pale corpse! we are taught to believe, that thou shalt burst the confines of the tomb, emerge in a glorified body, capable of higher degrees of improvement and happiness than thou hitherto hast known, and shine in youth and beauty immortal! Faith and hope point out delightful scenes of future happiness to us all after death; and O, let not unbelief and doubt chill the warm blood that flutters in the heart, at the idea of meeting those we loved here, in a better world; never more to be rent asunder, but to be blessed, and blessing, for ever, under the immediate eye and government of God, and in the company of just men made perfect! If, indeed, by warm hope and strong faith, we could preserve this prospect constantly in our minds, then might we exult in that fine triumph, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

But let me hasten to a conclusion, with an ardent wish that this warning, which may be the last to many of us now assembled within these walls, may not be given in vain. It is possible, that some among us may never enter the church again, till we are brought into it upon that bier, with ears insensible as the clod, and bosoms cold and hard as the marble that may cover them. He who can hear this warning voice, and look into the grave of the deceased before us, without receiving one good impression, may possibly, which God avert, fall into his own grave without repentance and without reformation. Take heed, how you neglect the means of grace and improvement. This is certainly a powerful call from the dead to the living. It is not I only who speak. It

is a voice issuing from that coffin; a voice issuing from the tombs around, and the graves below, that ought to penetrate the hearts of every one here, and will pierce like a two-edged sword, unless they are petrified, steeled, case-hardened, by unrepented lust and pride. Go, therefore, to your homes, pensive and considerate. Say to yourselves; Should God require my soul of me this night, can I expect mercy at his hands? Make your peace with God, be at peace with man, be at peace with your consciences. Reform whatever is wrong in your lives, prepare rationally and cheerfully for your death; that when disease, or accident, or violence, shall destroy the life of your bodies, your souls may be received into the bosom of your father and your God; and that you may rest in him, as our hope is, this our sister doth; and that you may smile even in the arms of death, and say to those who love you, and stand weeping round the curtains of your beds, in the words of our Saviour, "*I am going; but it is to my Father and to your Father; to my God and to your God.*"*

SERMON XXIV.

A PREPARATORY PERSUASIVE TO THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

[Preached at the Close of the Year.]

2 CHRON. XXX. part of the 18th and 19th verses.—*The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.*

FOR the particular occasion of these words, I must refer you to the chapter in the sacred history from

* John, xx. 17.

which they were selected. I have chosen them merely as introductory to the subject on which we are assembled to meditate, the SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, OR THE CHRISTIAN'S SACRIFICE.

Whoever takes a comprehensive view of mankind as described either in history, or in the voyages of circumnavigators, will be struck with the universality of sacrificial rites, and the shedding of the blood of brutes, to atone for human transgression. Wonderful, yet uniform persuasion, that the slaughter of animals should contribute to appease the wrath of an offended Deity! an opinion, at which common sense revolts, and philosophy is disgusted: yet we see it prevailing at early periods in all nations; not only in the barbarous and rude, but in the polished, the lettered, the humane. We trace its vestiges from the Jews, the Greeks, the Romans, even to the natives of the newly-discovered islands in the Pacific Ocean.* Reason alone, with all her penetrating sagacity, cannot explain this astonishing phenomenon, and relinquishes her researches in despair. Profane learning is foiled in her investigation of it, science acknowledges herself perplexed at it, logic denies its rationality, metaphysics are wrapt in tenfold darkness when they attempt to explain it; but religion draws aside the veil, and truth instantly advances in her native lustre. Religion humbly seeks, and joyfully finds, the cause of this and other inexplicable appearances, whether in the world of grace, the world of morals, or the world of nature, in the GREAT FIRST CAUSE.

After all that has been argued on the subject, it is certain that the sacrifice of animals as a propitia-

* See a very striking account of a human sacrifice in the voyages of Captain Cook.

tion of the Deity,* is of divine institution. Every believer in the Scriptures must acknowledge with reverence, that it is the ordinance of God. At the promulgation of the Law, and in the twenty-fourth verse of the twentieth chapter of Exodus, God himself condescended to give particular directions concerning the altar and the sacrifices. *An altar of earth,* says he, *thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings and thy peace offerings, thy sheep and thy oxen.* And his message to Pharaoh by Moses was, *Let my people go, that they may sacrifice to the Lord, their God.*

Since then this institution originated in the command of the all-wise and beneficent God, we may rest assured that it was not without its use, even if we could not discover it. It comes from God, it is therefore wise. But we may venture to conjecture its beneficial purpose.

The sacrifice of animals, according to the opinion of learned and judicious divines, was designed to answer these three ends: First, to represent to *man,* in a most forcible manner, the forfeiture of life which he had incurred: secondly, to signify God's gracious condescension in accepting a substitute: and thirdly, to prefigure that great and availing Substitute, which in the fulness of time was to be offered, even JESUS CHRIST.

In this great sacrifice all men were deeply interested; and sacrifices therefore became a part of the universal religion. In some mode, or at some period, all nations have adopted them. Previously to the existence or the diffusion of books, religion

* Qui sacrificat, id idem significat actione et gestu, quod qui precatur ore suo profitetur.

Vitringa Diss. Vol. i. p. 289.

was preserved in the world by rites, ceremonies, types, signs, and hieroglyphics; and the Sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ the righteous, was shadowed out by the sacrifice of the innoxious beasts of the field, the playful goat from the mountain, the spotless lamb from the shepherd's fold, and the placid bullock from the green pasture.* But when men began to forget the true and only God, the reason of the institution was forgotten also; though the external rite, the outward, visible, ceremonious part of it, the slaughter, and the offering of animals on the altar, remained, from age to age. A ceremony, the palpable object of the senses, was easily retained, long after the doctrine or intention of it, an object of the understanding too refined for the intellect of Barbarians, and soon disregarded by Polytheists and Idolaters, was lost in total oblivion; and the unenlightened inhabitant of the South Sea isles continues to this day shedding the blood of his harmless quadruped, and sometimes even of his fellow-creature, in compliance with a traditionary opinion, to appease the rudely sculptured block which he worships, though he knows nothing of the cause, the design, and the original institution of animal sacrifices. Poor child of nature! the day spring from on high has not yet visited thee; and thou continuest shedding blood, emblematic of the death of JESUS CHRIST, whose cross, it is to be hoped, will one day be fixed on thy shores—a more glorious standard than the banner, stained with blood, that waves in heathenish triumph over thy sequestered isle. Child of nature! may'st thou soon become the child of grace, enlightened by Christian knowledge,

* Reasoning was in a very low state; and among men little removed from savages, some striking action or exhibition was necessary to excite and preserve religious ideas.

warmed with Christian charity, and an aspirant to a happy resurrection!

On our island, blessed be God, the day spring from on high has long beamed with glorious lustre. We know that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, has been sacrificed for us. No longer is it necessary among us to slaughter animals, to shed the blood of bulls and goats, prefigurative of that mysterious dispensation. We know that our Redeemer, after having been sacrificed for the sins of the world, liveth to make intercession for us at the right hand of God. Sacrifice of sheep and oxen is therefore abolished, as no longer necessary.

But there yet remains a SACRIFICE, differing from the other only as the morning and the evening shadow, as the type and the antitype. Though a prefigurative rite, a prophetic or typical sacrifice, be no longer required of us, yet a commemorative and emblematic one is ordained by Jesus Christ, in perpetual remembrance of himself; a bloodless rite, an oblation of piety and charity, the SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

To this happy commemoration, this feast of love, we are now invited; *therefore will we keep the feast; therefore will we wash our hands in innocency, and so will we go to the altar.*

In innocence, said I? Alas! if perfect innocence be necessary, who among us shall presume to join in the Sacrifice? Yet the command is absolute. *This do,* says the Author and Finisher of our faith; *this do, in remembrance of me.* Then must we, with all humility, have recourse to the text, and say, *The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the Sanctuary.*

But since the receiving of the Sacrament appears to be attended with danger, is it not prudent (a cautious man may ask) to avoid the Lord's table entirely? Whither then, poor mortal, with all thy caution, whither wouldst thou fly, to escape danger? A state of sin is always a state of danger, and likely to become much more so, to those who avoid the means of grace. That a sinner should avoid what is expressly commanded by Heaven, as the best means of escaping the sin and danger that besets him, is no more reasonable, than to refuse liberty, because we are prisoners; to avoid medicine, because we are sick; to reject a donation, because we are poor. The Sacrament is instituted, because we are sinners; and for that reason shall we refuse to partake of it? We wish to be cleansed from our leprosy, yet, like Naaman, shall we refuse to wash in the waters of Israel?

One of the prophets, predicting the happy time of the Gospel, says, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness."* That fountain flows in copious and pellucid streams from the foot of the altar. Wash, therefore, sinners, and be clean; if ye were immaculate and pure before, you would now have no occasion for the divine lustration. But who is pure in the sight of God? *He charges his angels with folly; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.*

Absolute purity is certainly not compatible with the present state of human nature. All are ready to acknowledge their infirmity, though not equally inclined to seek support where alone it is to be found. There is indeed something of humility, and some-

* Zech. xiii. 1.

thing of pious fear, in this reluctance or delay to come to the altar, which entitles it to tenderness. But let it be remembered, that to desire purity, to endeavour to promote it, to aim at Christian perfection, though we should never attain unto it, is alone a sufficient preparation. Purity improved, as far as our natural infirmity will admit, by grace, is the effect of going to the altar, not the previous and necessary qualification. That high and extraordinary degree of goodness, which some men rigidly require of themselves to fit them for the Sacrament, is not to be obtained, if obtained at all, but as the happy consequence of it. It may, by the blessing of God, follow, but it is not indispensably necessary to precede. It is the end to be pursued, and cannot therefore be the means.

The great question which concerns us all is simply this: Whether the partaking of the body and blood of Christ is necessary to salvation, absolutely necessary, so certainly necessary that without it we cannot entertain rational hopes of being saved? Every man, high or low, rich or poor, is more deeply interested in this question, than in all those cares which agitate the busy world in the tumultuous pursuits of avarice or ambition.

Such is the question, and let him who instituted the Sacrament answer it. Hear him, all ye people. Consider his words, and form your own conclusions: "EXCEPT," says he, "YE EAT THE FLESH OF THE SON OF MAN, AND DRINK HIS BLOOD, YE HAVE NO LIFE IN YOU."

Such the question, and such the answer. Pause and ponder them. They require no comment. The question is plain, and the answer peremptory. Can any one pretend to be a Christian, who, after hearing these words of our Saviour, continues in a wilful,

constant, presumptuous neglect of the Lord's Supper? If you believe not what our Saviour himself says of the Sacrament, you are not a Christian; for you have not faith in Christ. If, on the other hand, you believe his words, the unavoidable inference is, that you must of necessity obey them. You will not dare to disregard a positive command at the hazard of your immortal soul. Hear the voice of the Redeemer once more; *If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. He that eateth me, shall live by me. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.* Can any words be more clearly and strongly declaratory? Though plain and brief, they are yet more convincing than the laboured persuasives of the most eloquent instructor. You must unavoidably infer from them, that to receive the Sacrament is generally necessary to salvation. What favourable exceptions God in his mercy may make, it is not ours to determine. But such, I believe, is the sound doctrine; and I have plainly laid it before you. It is not supported by my words, but the words of Jesus Christ. Consider them deliberately at home, meditate on their importance as you repose on your pillow, in the silent hour of night, when the world is shut out, and you commune, uninterrupted by its distractions, with your God and your conscience.

And surely it is an easy service. What does the Lord require of thee, but to unite in a communion of charity with your fellow-creatures, and of spiritual intercourse with your Maker, your Judge, and your Redeemer? What then remains, but that they who have hitherto proceeded from year to year, in the neglect of this ordinance, lay aside their careless security, dismiss their scruples, and prepare to receive at the first opportunity? Always remembering,

that as our animal food, our daily meals, would not nourish our bodies without a vital energy in the internal parts, without life and warmth in the organs of the stomach; so neither will this sacramental food produce spiritual growth, health, and immortal life, without a quickening spirit within, an assimilating power in the heart; that is, without faith, hope, charity, and repentance.

But you are afraid of being an unworthy receiver. You love God and man; you aspire to all goodness; but in the delicacy of your apprehensions, you are afraid of being an unworthy partaker of these holy mysteries. Your timidity is respectable. It shows that you are feelingly alive to the impulses of conscience. But be persuaded, that nothing can render us entirely unworthy of coming to the Sacrament, but a resolution to continue unworthy. A sense of unworthiness after our best exertions to become worthy, instead of deterring, should lead us to the altar. Conscious demerit, with a sincere desire of improvement in all Christian graces; a thankful remembrance of the death of Christ, love and charity for all mankind, I firmly believe, but humbly assert, are sufficient qualifications for receiving the holy Sacrament. The sacrifice of the wicked is, indeed, abomination to the Lord; but wickedness, remember, is as odious to God in the porch as in the chancel, in the pew as at the altar, at your fire-side as in the sanctuary; and if you aretruly and indeed unqualified to come to the Sacrament, you are at the same time unqualified to come to divine service, and, it is to be feared, are not in a state of salvation.

But since to receive the Sacrament is evidently necessary, and the qualifications attainable, consisting in honest intentions, virtuous purposes, pious sentiments, kind affections, and beneficent actions,

how happens it, that few, in comparison with the great numbers of neglectful professors of Christianity, accustom themselves to come at the periodical and stated times to the Supper of the Lord? Many, I know, are careless of all that concerns their spiritual state; engrossed by worldly pursuits; eagerly chasing bubbles coloured by fancy, and neglecting substantial good; and for such no apology, I fear, will be received as a sufficient excuse. Others are willing, indeed, to go, but that there is a lion in the way. Their wishes are virtuous, but their hearts are appalled by those frightful words, the danger of eating and drinking our own damnation; words improperly translated, and commonly misunderstood; words, in their genuine sense, applicable to the Corinthians only, who sat down to the Lord's table as to the common feast, to indulge in luxury, gluttony, and every kind of intemperance. No reverence did they preserve, no religious awe, no humility, no purity, and, it is to be feared, little charity. Riot, debauchery, and unchristian broils, were the probable consequences of such a banquet, on an occasion, when every thing that is pure and peaceable ought to have given the best relish, and to have hallowed the feast of love.

But the decency of sacramental rites in modern times precludes among us the possibility of such offences as rendered the banquet of the Corinthians poisonous to the partakers of it, and offensive to him whose favour it was designed to propitiate. Silence, devotion, and decorum, preside at our sacred table. Under such circumstances we cannot offend as the Corinthians offended; and therefore need not apply to ourselves the formidable words which were addressed solely to them, and are now scarcely applicable to any serious professors throughout

Christendom. Let us not imagine that we are invited by our gracious Father in Heaven to his Holy Supper, like the wretch recorded in history, who sat down to a tyrant's banquet with a sword over his head, suspended by a single hair.

No; the GOOD GOD will pardon every one who with sincerity prepareth his HEART to seek him at the Sacrament, though he should not be perfectly cleansed. If the heart is rightly disposed by Faith and Charity, God will accept the oblation of it, notwithstanding all its former imperfections. He will not be extreme to mark what has been done amiss, if the sinner feels sorrow for what is past, and forms purposes of amendment in future. Though his sins have been red as scarlet, yet shall they be white as wool, when washed with the tears of penitence, and cleansed in the fountain of mercy that flows from the altar.

Let me then prevail on all those who have hitherto neglected this holy and salutary ordinance, of whom there is perhaps, a majority in most parishes, (either through carelessness, or too great apprehension of danger,) let me prevail on them to lay aside their error, and to take this holy Sacrament to their comfort at every convenient opportunity; it will preserve their spiritual health unimpaired; it will renew their piety when decayed by worldly cares and habits of inattention; it will give them a pure and exalted pleasure; it will enrich them with grace in this life, and ultimately crown them with immortality.

The necessity of receiving you must allow, as we have already seen, if you believe in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. It must be important to your happiness, or he would not have made it necessary. Evident as this conclusion is to all, yet many preserve a regular behaviour in all other religious

duties, and are negligent of this alone; continually postponing the Communion to some more convenient season; a season which, considering the instability of human affairs, may never come, may come too late, or be entirely prevented by a sudden and unexpected dissolution.

Permit me to ask, what season more convenient for doing what we are convinced we ought to do, than the present, or the first occasion that occurs? Permit me to ask you, why you came to church this day? Nay, rather ask your own hearts, and speak the truth to yourselves, as in the presence of God, who knoweth the secrets of all hearts. Did you come from a principle of duty and the dictates of conscience? Did you come to confess your dependence on God, your belief of his promises, your faith and trust in the merits of a crucified Saviour? Did you come to obtain the pardon of your sins, and the grace of God to assist you in the hour of your distress, and the struggle of temptation? Were these the reasons of your coming to church this day? I trust they were the reasons. They were good reasons; and as they qualify you to join in the prayers of the church, they at the same time qualify you to receive the Sacrament, to communicate with your neighbours in Christian love, and with your God in unaffected piety. If you have joined this day sincerely in the prayers, while you knelt in your pew, you may safely advance to the altar, as fit and as worthy as man, weak, imperfect man, can be, in this his sublunary state. The poor Publican in the Gospel, sinner as he was, came better qualified to pray than the proud and puritanical Pharisee.

But on the other hand, if, during the divine service of this very day, you have not been sincere, if you have not resolved to amend your lives, if you are not

sensible of your failings, and have not a firm faith in the merits of our Saviour's sufferings and death; if you are not truly thankful for his mercies, if you are not in charity with all men—then, pardon me, when I ask you, how have you been employed during the last hour? Your lips have professed these things; and after all, have you mocked God, insulted your Saviour, deceived your neighbour, and, which is worse, deceived yourselves? Then, indeed, you cannot come to the altar, with safety. Then, you must postpone it till the arrival of a more convenient season. But let that season be, if it is possible, the earliest opportunity afforded; for your soul is sick, and it is dangerous to delay the medicine.

Give me leave to remind you, that a solemn, though a festive season is at hand. A new year is approaching. Let us duly consider it, and prepare to celebrate its commencement as Christians. Many such seasons we may not live to see. We may never see another. How many of them whom we knew, has the grave swallowed up in the year that is just elapsed. Let us seize the moment as it passes, while we have health, sense, and life. There can be no danger in communicating, if we communicate with sincerity, and there may be the greatest benefit. Who would neglect so easy a service, when he knows that under these circumstances it can do him no evil; but may smooth the bed of death, and contribute to secure everlasting felicity?

Let all those who have hitherto neglected the Holy Sacrament, as a matter which may concern the neighbours, but which does not concern them, go home pensively, and examine the Gospel faithfully, and consider fairly whether it is not true, as I have already shown, that CHRIST himself has made it necessary to salvation. If so, and so they will

indeed find it to be, let them be alarmed. If there is truth in CHRIST JESUS, they have reason to be alarmed. The danger is great. *Awake thou that sleepest,* let each say to his conscience, *and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.* Be it their first concern to prepare for the very next celebration of the Lord's Supper. This is the one thing needful; and let them lay it to heart more than all the concerns of their farm or of their merchandise.

But I am sensible I take up too much of your time, especially as your own good dispositions, may render exhortation superfluous. I conclude therefore with a short prayer, suggested by my text, in which, I doubt not, you will join with cordial fervour:

" The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not perfectly cleansed according to the strictest purification. The Lord look mercifully on those who approach his table, laden, indeed, with infirmities, and stained with sin; but sensible of their burden and sorry for their pollution. The Lord shower down his grace into their hearts, that they may rise from their knees full of comfort, and return to the duties and employments of life with the cheerfulness resulting from a good conscience, with confirmed piety to Thee, O God, and with enlarged charity to their neighbour; forgiving all that have injured or offended them, as they hope to be forgiven by Thee."

SERMON XXV.

THE PROSPECT OF PERPETUAL AND UNIVERSAL PEACE TO BE ESTABLISHED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN PHILANTHROPY.

[Preached at Brighton, Aug. 18, 1793.]

ST. LUKE, ii. 14.—*Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men.*

THIS gracious proclamation from Heaven announces the great purpose of Jesus Christ, the promotion of piety to God and benevolence to man. It may indeed be called the motto of Christianity. It may form the inscription on its unstained banners, as it advances in its progress, endeavouring to diffuse the blessings of perpetual peace and universal love.

At a time when atheism has been imputed to a great and polished nation, and many in the highest ranks in our own country, whose examples are seducing among the vulgar, from the false glitter of birth and fortune, seem to plume themselves on the neglect of public worship, as a mark of superior sense, or of peculiar gaiety of heart; the neglect of that public worship, which they allow to be necessary to their inferiors, which they see recommended by royal example, enforced by royal proclamations, and required by law; at a time, when a specious philosophy, under the pretence of removing early prejudices in favour of Christianity, is gradually sapping the foundation of that ancient and venerable fabric; at such a time, so unfavourable to the prevalence of that religion, in which our pious fathers lived and died in peace, under the benign influence of which our country has flourished in unexampled prosperity, and by which human nature has been elevated to all

attainable perfection; at such a time, an invitation to give glory to God, or to Christianity, enforced with seriousness and ardour, will at least have the merit of being seasonable.

Our Saviour's own words of invitation are indeed sweetly persuasive, if the world would hear them, amidst the cares of avarice, the struggles of ambition, and the clangor of arms. *Come unto me,* says he, *all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.*

Who among us is not concerned in this address, which of us is not labouring with some evil or laden with some sin, some infirmity, some habitual passion or some sore disease?

In what part of Christendom is that Christianity which we all profess, suffered to have its full effect, either on the national character and conduct, or on the regulation of private life?

Give me leave to bring before you, for a few moments, the great picture of the living world, as it is now exhibited, in the most polished part of it, Europe, enlightened as it is by science and professing Christianity. Let us consider whether among those who bear rule, by power or by example, GLORY IS DULY GIVEN TO GOD; whether they do really promote to the utmost of their power, PEACE ON EARTH; and whether they seem to entertain GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN, in that extent and degree which the Gospel of Jesus Christ requires of all who profess to believe it, and who expect the rewards of the pious and the peaceful.

The picture is sadly shaded with misery. Peace on earth! Alas, where is it? amid all our refinement in the modes of cultivated life, all our elegant pleasures, all our boasted humanity, WAR, that giant fiend, is stalking over empires in garments dropping

with the blood of men, shed by men, personally unoffended and unoffending; of men, professing to love as brethren, yet cutting off each other from the land of the living, long before the little time allotted them by nature is elapsed; and increasing beyond measure, all the evils to which man is naturally and morally doomed, at the command of a narrow short-sighted human policy, and an ambition which, considering the calamities it causes, I must call accursed.

The shades of the picture are black as death, the colouring of blood. No; not all the arts of politicians can veil its shocking deformity, from any eyes but those of the vulgar;* the vulgar, I mean, rich as well as poor, titled as well as untitled, swaying sceptres or wielding a spade. By all but the vulgar and the creatures of despotism, offensive war, with all its pompous exterior, must be deprecated as the disgrace and calamity of human nature. Poor outside pageantry! What avails the childish or womanish finery of gaudy feathers on the heads of warriors? Though tinged with the gayest colours by the dyer's art, they appear to the eye of humanity, weeping over the fields of battle, dipt in gore. What avail the tinsel, the trappings, the gold and the scarlet? Ornaments fitter for the pavilions of pleasure than the field of carnage. Can they assuage the anguish of a wound, or call back the departed breath of the pale victims of war; poor victims, unnoticed and unpitied, far from their respective countries, on the plains of neighbouring provinces, the wretched seat of actual war; not of parade, the mere play of soldiers, the pastime of the idle spectator, a summer day's sight for the gazing saunterer;

* Ἰδιωται is the Greek term for the *idea*, which means men of common coarse minds, uncultivated by philosophy, "*et iis studiis quæ ad humanitatem pertinent.*"

but on the scene of carnage, the Aceldama, the field of blood, where, in the fury of the conflict, man appears to forget his nature and exhibits feats at which angels weep, while nations shout in barbarous triumph.

The elegant decorations of a sword, wantonly drawn in offensive war, what are they, but a mockery of the misery it was intended to create? An instrument of death to a fellow-creature who has never injured me, a holiday ornament! Colours of the darkest hue might form the appropriate habiliments of those who are causelessly sent as the messengers of death; of death, not to animals of another species, fierce and venomous; but to those who like themselves, were born of woman, who sucked the breast of a woman, and who, if spared by the ruthless sword, must like themselves in a few short years die by the necessity of nature; die, and moulder into dust, under the turf once verdant and flowery, but now crimsoned with human gore. Alike born the victors and the vanquished, alike they die if spared in the battle; and alike must stand at the latter day, all stript of the distinctions of finer dress and superior rank, in the presence of those whom they cut off in this world before their time, in youth and health, like rose-buds cropt in the bud of existence.

Cease, oh! cease, while such scenes are passing in the field of actual slaughter, cease, for humanity's sake, the din of martial music. It is surely a mockery of wretchedness! Poor artifice! to drown the voice of anguish calling for help, and calling in vain; the yells of the dying, the groans of those who lie agonizing without any hand to pour balsam into their wounds: cruel contrivance to stifle by noise the bitter lamentations, the last sad privilege of the

mourners, who bereaved of their friend, their parent, or their child, are bereaved indeed!*

Oh war! thy blood-stained visage cannot be disguised by the politician's artifice. Thy brilliant vestments are to him who sympathizes with human woe in all climes and conditions, no better than sable mourning; thy melody, doleful discord, the voice of misery unutterable. Decked, like the harlot, in finery not thine own, thou art even the pest of human nature; and in countries where arbitrary power prevails, the last sad refuge of selfish cruel despotism, building its gorgeous palaces on the ruins of those who support its grandeur by their personal labour; and whom it ought to protect and to nourish under the olive shade of peace.

What feeling man can cast his eyes (as he proceeds in contemplating the picture) over the tented plains, on the theatre of war, glittering in the sunbeams with polished arms and gay with silken banners, without a sigh, if he views it undazzled by the "pride, pomp and circumstance," which the wisdom of this world has, from the earliest times, devised to facilitate its own purposes; purposes, it is to be feared, that have little reference to him who said, *that his kingdom was not of this world;* and whose religion was announced by a proclamation of peace on earth. What a picture is the tablet we are viewing of the heart of man, and of the misery of man! that he should thus find it necessary to defend himself with so much effort, at such expense of blood and treasure, not, as I said before, against the beast of the forest, not against the tiger and the wolf, for then it were well; but against his fellow man, his Christian brother, subject to the same wants, agonized with the same natural sufferings, doomed to the same

* And God Almighty give you mercy before the man.—If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved. Gen. xliii. 14.

natural death, and as a Christian, hoping for the same salvation; and perhaps separated from him only by a few leagues of intervening ocean.

All the waters of that ocean cannot wash away the stain thus deeply fixed on the human character.

Lo! in countries where war actually rages, thousands and tens of thousands of our fellow-creatures, all perhaps Christians in profession, many in the flower of their youth, torn from the peaceful vale, the innocent occupations of agriculture, or the useful employments of mechanic arts, to learn with indefatigable pains (separated at the same time from all the sweet endearments and duties of domestic life) to learn the art of spreading devastation and most expeditiously and effectually destroying those of their fellow-creatures, whom politicians have bade them consider as enemies, and therefore to cut off in their prime; but whom Christ taught, even if they were personal enemies, to love, to pity, and to save. Do they not, thoughtless as they are, require to be reminded of the gracious proclamation from Heaven, "On earth peace, Good-will towards men."

I wish not to dwell on the gloomy picture exhibited by various nations of Europe, professing Christianity as part of their respective constitutions; but acting towards each other with the ferocity of such savages as never heard that invitation of Christ; *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.* But ere we turn from the melancholy scene, let every man of sensibility drop a tear over it, as Xerxes wept when he beheld his armies, doomed shortly to perish by the law of nature if spared by the sword of violence. Let the man of sensibility reflect, that all the busy actors on this stage, who spend all the time allowed them in this life in a destructive activity, will themselves soon sleep in silence under the

turf on which they now proudly march to mutual slaughter; the spear fallen from their hands, and the gay flag trampled in the mire! Fall they must, the conquerors and the conquered, all subdued by those universal victors, age, disease, and death, if peradventure they should escape in the shock of the battle.

Alas! is it not enough that age, disease, death, and misery, in a hundred forms, are hourly waging war with all mankind; but they must add to the sting of death new venom; new anguish to every pang by waging war with each other?. Men who as individuals are kind and humane, appear as nations, still in a state of barbarism and savage nature.

Yet we must believe and maintain the political necessity of war, though the greatest evil which can be endured by a civilized, flourishing and free people; we must believe its political necessity, because they, who in the various nations of the world, seem to claim an hereditary right to wisdom, as well as power, have, in all ages and in the most enlightened and Christian countries, so determined; yet, with all due submission to that wisdom and to that power, let every man who justly glories in the name and feelings of a man, mourn and lament the existence of that political necessity; and if it be such, pray to the father of us all, of every clime and colour, that under the benign influence of that Christianity which we profess, war may be no more on the face of the whole earth, and the sword every where converted into the pruning hook and the plough share.

But here let me be permitted to say, that no disgraceful imputation whatever can fall on those who are engaged in the profession of war, from these general observations on its calamities; for they have frequently displayed proofs of dispositions

singularly noble, generous and humane, as well as brave. Defensive war, in the present disordered state of human affairs, is sometimes as necessary as it is honourable; necessary to maintain peace, and the beautiful gradations of a well regulated society.

We, however, as faithful ministers of the Gospel, are on our part bound by our duty, to pray for peace; to promote peace as much as in us lies; to preach peace, to cry aloud for peace and spare not, even though the instigators to war should frown upon us; and in defiance of the God of peace, prepare for the battle. It is our indispensable duty; and O! that the still small voice of religion and philosophy could be heard amidst the cannon's roar, the shouts of victory, and the clamours of discordant politicians! It would say to all nations and to all people "Come unto me, all ye that labour in the field of battle, heavy laden with the weapons of war, worn out with its hardships, and in jeopardy every hour; come unto me and I will give you rest; I will be unto you as a helmet, and a shield from the fiery darts of the common enemy of all mankind; and will lead you, after having rendered you happy and safe in this world, to the realms of everlasting peace."

But from the picture of public and national misery, arising in great measure from a thoughtless disregard to Christ and his benevolent laws, let us turn to the contemplation of private life. The great and the fashionable in all countries stand foremost in the picture, and attract the eye by the gay colouring in which they choose to be exhibited.

Do they then principally and in avowed preference to all other objects, give GLORY TO GOD ON HIGH? do they seek to promote PEACE ON EARTH, OR WAR? do they appear to cherish any peculiar degree of good-will towards men? or, are they attached to

themselves, and the preservation of their own power, nominal honours, and pleasures, at all events, though it cost the poor citizen many of his comforts; and the poor soldier his limbs or his life; and the public its security or its opulence?

On a calm review of the picture, many of those also who seem ostentatious of superior happiness, appear to labour and to be heavy laden with a variety of splendid miseries and polished perturbations; and to them also, Christ certainly addresses himself, as well as to the poor and needy, when he says, *Come unto me and I will give you rest.* He speaks, but they cannot hear, and will not come. The places of worship have no charms or attractions for them. Pleasure, or what fashion chooses to call so, for feeling and nature have little to do in the choice, is their idol; and they worship in her temple glittering with variegated brilliancy, to the midnight hour, with the most servile adoration. After six days toiling in her service, they cannot give up even one hour on the seventh, to the religion of those countries, whose religion they are bound to promote by example; but by their apparent conduct, in this particular, contribute to diffuse that very atheism, which, in reviling their neighbours, they are among the first most loudly to condemn. If, as is granted, the church be one of the most massy columns of the state, they certainly undermine that column by their irreligious example, more effectually, than all the writings of the seditious by their arguments or declamation. The whole business of many of them is to banish reflection; but this, as it is one of the strongest proofs of human misery and the want of internal religious consolation, prevents at the same time all attention to piety and effectual benevolence. Such persons cannot bear to think, even during one hour,

on one day in the week, devoted by the laws of God and their country to religious services, even after seven days spent in the indulgence of a silly pride, in useless or mischievous activity, and in imitative folly. Then be assured, that thus destitute of the affections of piety and benevolence, though they study every appearance of happiness, they are neither happy themselves, nor solicitous for the happiness of their fellow-creature. Their ostentatious enjoyments are frivolous; yet prevent reflection on their own or others misery. They labour and are heavy laden with the *tædium vitæ*, with fulness of enjoyment, with envy, at seeing others rising in youth, beauty and figure, while their sun is setting! They suffer a thousand mortifications, of which vanity is sorely sensible, and which are incompatible with the benign sentiments of piety to God and love to man. They seek rest and find none; for they seek it every where but where it is to be found, in the religion of Jesus Christ. They cannot adopt the religion of the vulgar, though like the vulgar they must die; they cannot come to Jesus Christ, but eagerly repair to the god of this world, who indeed blinds their eyes and hardens their hearts; but will he exempt them from the common lot of humanity? Will he snatch them from death, temporal or eternal? Will he, in the hour of distress, deliver them from disease, from pain, from the pangs of a wounded conscience? Will he enable them to bear themselves, to endure solitude, their own company for a single day? Will he teach them, like religion, to support their own reflections, to put off childhood and childish distinctions, such as a peculiar garment or a singular vehicle, formed to attract notice? Will he teach them to become men, men in understanding as well as form, daring to follow nature,

reason, and simplicity of manners, uninfluenced by fashion and affectation? Men in true courage, and men also in feeling, in the softness and sympathetic qualities of man; in a tender regard for the honour and happiness of their fellow men, whom they now appear to despise and hate; and men also in the sense of their own helplessness and their dependence. Dependence, did I say? I must remember that they are men of spirit; not, I fear, of a holy spirit; but of an audacious, haughty, contemptuous spirit; a spirit of useless activity doing no good in society, yet assuming all importance; a spirit aiming at distinction in trifles, doing something to surprise and strike even those very beholders whom they affect to despise, by some singular absurdity in the colour or form of a vestment, or the fashion and trappings of an equipage; a spirit, which displays courage where there is no danger; bravery by oaths and noisy language to helpless inferiors; wit by blasphemy against God; convivial gaiety by drunkenness; self-consequence, by perpetual noise and constant hurry, where there is no business, and neither inclination nor ability for it, if there were; persons, who seem to put their trust in horses and chariots for their happiness, and who drive to glory with the speed of Jehu, too often deserving the fate of Absalom. Are such persons inclined to give glory to God in the highest, above all things? By their habitual absence from places of worship, it might be concluded that they have little more pretensions to piety, than the brutes whom they urge in the career of their mean ambition. Are they busy in promoting peace on earth? No; not if war tends to their own aggrandizement or emolument. Do they seem solicitous to prove their good-will towards men? Wrapt up in selfishness, selfish grandeur, sel-

fish vanity, selfish gratifications, they have no heart for pity; and the hand, that is open for the expenses of pleasure and ostentation, is shut, closed with adamantine grasp, to the unseen, unassuming works of mercy and disinterested love.

Such spirits, though evidently labouring and heavy laden with self-created woes, yet by the fascinating brilliancy of an outside, lead thousands of all ranks and professions in the train of dissipation. Folly indeed adorns her cap with such finery, and rings her bells so loudly and incessantly, that the flock follows implicitly; too much occupied in listening and gazing, to know whither they are hastening with headlong fury, though the path should finally terminate in temporal or eternal destruction.

Can they give glory to God in the highest, above all other objects, who seem totally engrossed in giving glory to each other and to themselves? "Come unto me," says wisdom, by the mouth of Jesus Christ, but folly deafens the ear, and stifles the gentle voice which bringeth good tidings of peace, eternal peace.

But let us turn from both these pictures; from scenes of blood and carnage, from the horrid din of war, and all its dreadful preparations, which form an amusing sight and pastime for the idle. From the noise of self-assuming impertinence and folly let us turn to the retreats of wisdom, in the philosophic shade, and there listen to the lessons of mercy and love, taught by Jesus Christ, the meek and lowly. Let us elevate our minds to heaven and give glory, not merely to some earthly potentate, for the sake of advantage, for a title, an employment, or a pension; but to the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Ruler of princes, with hearts filled with gratitude for existence and preservation; falling down with sincere

humility before him, and remembering in the midst of all our adventitious honours, that there will be an equality in the grave, and that death, in a few years will level all distinctions. Let pride and pomp think of this, and learn universal philanthropy.

Let us all, in our several stations, promote peace on earth, if it be possible; not only by seeking as we have power, to compose the differences of nations by negotiation, but by subduing our own pride and ambition, by learning to consider all men under the sun, as united to us by brotherly love, or, as it is termed, fraternity; natural, not political fraternity; the strong tie of one common nature. Let us appeal to reason in all national disputes; to reason, the constituent essence of man, and not only to the sad resource of creatures without reason, brute force and violence.

With respect to the third particular in the text, good-will towards men, let us imitate God and our saviour in universal philanthropy. Let us be ashamed of expending time, and riches, and employing power, merely in selfish gratification. Open your hearts to the love of your fellow-creatures, wherever they exist. Men do not love each other as they ought. If distinguished by a ribbon, or title, or a little brief authority, they often become too proud to own each other as brothers and children of the same family; yet human blood is all of one colour, and naked came we into the world, and naked shall we depart. The little distinctions of a party, the separation of a rivulet or a wall, is sometimes sufficient to estrange man from man for life; and the intervention of a sea, to bid them point the cannon, arm the floating castle, and fix the encampment against the poor partakers of mortality, who, like themselves, are crawling about and breathing the same vital air, in the

little space allotted to their lives, on an opposite shore. How must a superior being pity or deride the puny ants of the same ant-hill, armed with weapons of death, and destroying each other by thousands and tens of thousands, when separated by a straw or a puddle, in a dispute for a grain of wheat or a particle of dust, with space enough around them for all, and in the midst of abundance! Religion, both natural and revealed, undoubtedly teaches us that all men are brethren, though the word fraternity misunderstood, be offensive; and all governments in Christendom are, I believe, sufficiently willing to allow the utility of religion to a state, even in promoting civil subordination.

But after all, there can be no rational purpose of any religion, but to make those who profess it happy. It disavows the politics of the worldling. It was not designed by its holy Author as a state engine, in any country in the universe, to support the power of a fortunate few, who may be born to titles and estates; who bask in the sunshine of courts, or who lord it over their fellow men in despotical empires, by a power usurped in days of darkness, or acquired by chance and conquest, and preserved by interest, prejudice, or the violence of arbitrary authority. It was designed for all the sons and daughters of Adam, to console them in their sufferings, to diffuse peace, love, and joy; to soften the horrors of death, and to lead to everlasting life. Such was the proclamation from heaven, announcing the religion of our country, which is as much a part of our excellent constitution as any other in which we glory. Hear it, ye nations, On earth peace, Good-will towards men. It is the law of Christ, and virtually enforced by the law of the land throughout Christendom.

Thus benevolent in its design, and beneficial in its effects, uniformly, at all times and under all circumstances, beneficial, unless counteracted by narrow-minded statesmen; let all men, however otherwise divided, unite to preserve and to perpetuate among them the influence of the Christian religion. Let the princes of the earth, whose examples are so powerful in promoting either virtue or vice, in diffusing either happiness or misery, trust not so much in fleets and armies, for they have failed in all times and countries; as in the living God; who, we are told, in Scripture, can remove the sceptre from one nation to another people; whose omnipotent arm, after all our preparations, can break the spear asunder, and burn the chariots in the fire. May the preservation of a single life, among those committed to their tutelary care, be more desired than the conquest of a province, for the purpose of interest; or the demolition of a city, to serve the cause of despots; of despots, base, ignorant, and inhuman, combined (if ever there should be such a combination) against the happiness of the whole race. Let it be deemed by Christians a greater honour to pluck one sprig of olive, than to bring home whole loads of laurel; to be welcomed by the cordial salute of hearts, delighted with the blessing of peace restored, than by the forced explosion of ten thousand cannons, and the false brilliancy of a venal illumination.

Ye in the lowest ranks of society, wherever ye are dispersed all over the habitable globe; ye, our poor brethren, who are numbered but not named, when ye fall for your respective countries; who, in foreign climes, happily not in our own, are looked down upon with sovereign contempt, and even let out by petty despots, as butchers of your species, in any cause for pay, preserve at least your religion,

obey its laws, hope for its comforts; bind it round your hearts, and let neither the artful philosopher, by his false refinements beguile you; nor the haughty oppressor, by keeping you in total ignorance, rob you of this treasure; it is a pearl of great price, lock it up in the casket of your bosom, there to remain through life, inviolate; it is your only riches; but it makes you opulent in the midst of poverty, and happy in the midst of woes, which without it, would be scarcely tolerable.

The examples of the great and fashionable in affairs which concern God and conscience, are not to be followed by you without great caution. Their religious education is too often wretchedly defective. They too often will not submit to early discipline, and who shall enforce it? They are unfortunately surrounded from their youth by a herd of mean sycophants, the panders of their passions, who flatter them, conceal the truth from them, and lead them into every folly, absurdity, and vulgarity, which may please that taste which they have studiously depraved; a taste which levels more than all those misrepresented principles of equality, mistakenly perhaps adopted by foreign politicians, and angrily opposed by others deeply interested in all inequality, knowing that they must sink, if merit only is allowed to rise.

Let not vain philosophy corrupt any of you. Philosophy cannot afford you the comforts of Christianity; and till philosophy can substitute a more comfortable religion, in its place, retain, with resolute attachment, the religion of Jesus Christ, honouring God and loving man; seeking peace, and ensuing it; doing every thing in your power to render life pleasant and happy to all men; for such, after all, is the most rational end of all policy, and all religion,

the rest is grimace and hypocrisy, statecraft or priestcraft, tending to despotism or fanaticism.

If the Christian religion, apparently laid aside, when to lay it aside suits the convenience of politicians, were indeed allowed to influence above every thing else the conduct of princes, and the councils of all cabinets, how different would be the picture of Europe.

"Now dissentions, depredations, villainous partitions of peaceful kingdoms, wars and murders, are constantly ravaging this respectable abode of philosophy, this brilliant asylum of arts and sciences. To reflect on the sublimity of our conversation, and the meanness of our conduct; on the humanity of our maxims, and the cruelty of our actions; on the meekness of our religion, and the horror of our persecution, on our policy so wise in theory, and so absurd in practice; on the beneficence of sovereigns, and the misery of their people; on governments so mild, wars so destructive; how can one reconcile it,"* —but by supposing that religion and benevolence are chiefly confined to professions; and that they have little real influence on the hearts of nations or their rulers. In a truly Christian country, Peace on earth and Goodwill towards men, must of necessity be the ultimate object of its political wisdom and national effort. What is aggrandizement without tranquillity? Liberty, commerce, agriculture, these are the beautiful daughters of peace.

If the Christian religion in all its purity, and in its full force, were suffered to prevail universally, the sword of offensive war must be sheathed for ever, and the din of arms would at last be silenced in

* The above is a quotation from a little treatise entitled "A Project for perpetual Peace."

perpetual peace. Glorious idea! I might be pardoned, if I indulged the feelings of enthusiastic joy at a prospect so transporting. Perpetual and universal peace! The jubilee of all human nature. Pardon my exultation, if it be only an illusive prospect. Though the vision is fugacious as the purple tints of an evening sky, it is enchanting; it is as innocent as delightful. The very thought furnishes a rich banquet for Christian benevolence. But let us pause in our expressions of joy, for when we turn from the fancied Elysium, to sad reality, to scenes of blood and desolation, we are the more shocked by the dismal contrast. Let us then leave ideal pictures, and consider a moment the most rational means of promoting, as far as in our power, perpetual and universal peace. If war be a scourge, as it has been ever called and allowed to be, it must be inflicted for our offences. Then let every one, in every rank, the most elevated as well as the most abject, endeavour to propitiate the Deity, by innocence of life and obedience to the divine law, that the scourge may be no longer necessary. Let him add his prayers to his endeavours, that devastation may no more waste the ripe harvest, (while many pine with hunger,) burn the peaceful village, level the hut of the harmless cottager, overturn the palace, and deface the temple; destroying, in its deadly progress, the fine productions of art, as well as of nature: but that the shepherd's pipe may warble in the vale, where the shrill clarion and the drums dissonance now grate harshly on the ear of humanity; that peace may be within and without our walls, and plenteousness in our cottages as well as in our palaces; that we may learn to rejoice in subduing ourselves, our pride, whence cometh contention and all other malignant passions, rather than in reducing fair cities to ashes, and erecting a blood-stained

streamer in triumph over those who may have fallen indeed—but fallen in defending with bravery, even to death, their wives, their children, their houses, and their altars, from the destroying demon of offensive war.

O thou God of mercy, grant that the sword may return to its scabbard for ever; that the religion of Jesus Christ may be duly understood, and its benign influence powerfully felt by all kings, princes, rulers, nobles, counsellors, and legislators, on the whole earth; that they may all combine in a league of philanthropy, to enforce by reason and mild persuasion, the law of love, or Christian charity, among all mankind, in all climes, and in all sects; consulting, like superior beings, the good of those beneath them; not endeavouring to promote their own power and aggrandizement by force and arms; but building their thrones, and establishing their dominion on the hearts of their respective people, preserved from the horrors of war by their prudence and clemency: and enjoying, exempt from all unnecessary burthens, the fruits of their own industry; every nation thus blest, permitting all others under the canopy of heaven to enjoy the same blessings uninterrupted, in equal peace and security. O melt the hard heart of pride and ambition, that it may sympathize with the lowest child of poverty, and grant, O thou God of order, as well as of mercy and love, that we of this happily constituted nation may never experience the curse of despotism on one hand; nor, on the other, the cruel evils of anarchy; that as our understandings become enlightened by science, our hearts may be softened by humanity, that we may be ever free, not using our liberty as a cloak for licentiousness, that we may all, in every rank and degree, live together peaceably in Christian love, and die in Christian hope, and that all nations

which the sun irradiates in his course, united in the bonds of amity, may unite also in the joyful acclamation of the text, with heart and voice, and say, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men."

SERMON XXVI.

ON THE NECESSITY OF INCREASING THE PLACES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP ON THE ESTABLISHMENT; AND ON THE DUTY OF SUPPORTING THE OBJECTS OF THE PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY.

[Preached at the opening of the Chapel of the Philanthropic Society, on the 9th of November, 1806.]

ISAIAH, XXVIII. 16.—*Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.*

IN uttering the first syllables ever solemnly pronounced from the hallowed place in which I stand; in opening, for the first time, the gates of this House of Prayer; I bow with reverential awe, and implore, on the very threshold, the blessing of the Almighty. May the light of God's countenance shine upon it, may his holy spirit sanctify it, may his influence cause it to become a fountain of light to them that sit in darkness, a sanctuary to the pious, a solace to the afflicted, a school of truth, a seminary of sound doctrine, the means of converting sinners, and of turning many to righteousness from generation to generation, till time shall be no more; AND THE GLORIOUS MAJESTY OF THE LORD OUR GOD BE UPON IT; PROSPER THOU THE WORK OF OUR HANDS UPON US; O, PROSPER THOU OUR HANDY WORK.

To this invocation, the effusion of a heart warmed and animated by the solemn scene around, may all, who hear me this day, unanimously subjoin, in the silent ejaculation of devotional fervour, a sincere AMEN! nor will our prayer be poured in vain; for we cannot but believe, that, if any transactions of busy mortals ever attracted the gracious and approving eye of Heaven, (of which there is no doubt) it must be, when God looks down and beholds an assembly like this, convened for no other purpose, but to institute the perpetual worship of him, in a new temple; and, at the same time, to open or enlarge a source of comfort to suffering humanity: and I am confident, life can present but few situations in which the humble powers of man, are more holily, and, I may add, more divinely exerted, than that in which we are this moment engaged; when we are assembled, with zealous alacrity, to promote in humble co-operation with the divine grace, the united purposes of piety and philanthropy; to honour our Creator with our hearts and lips, and to open our hands, as stewards of his bounty, to the most destitute and forlorn among his creatures.

The words of my text, from which, under the impression of circumstances so new and awful, I have for a moment digressed, are highly figurative, and in the sublime style of oriental poetry; but, from their evident reference to a holy building, they may, I think, be applied to the present solemn occasion; on which a Christian sanctuary is first opened to the worshippers, not indeed a figurative sanctuary; but a solid, costly, and beautiful temple made with hands; in the construction of which, you, the honoured institutors and promoters of the whole establishment, may be said to have chosen FOR A FOUNDATION, A STONE, A TRIED STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER STONE,

A SURE FOUNDATION, EVEN JESUS CHRIST. You have founded both your house of prayer, and your house of mercy, on a scriptural basis, on the love of God, and the love of your neighbour, on piety and philanthropy; that piety, and that philanthropy, which the principles of Christianity teach and enforce; with a permanancy of effect, beyond all systems, which the world has yet seen, either of moral philosophy, or of legislation. The PRECIOUS CORNER STONE of your building is the rock of ages; and amidst the revolutions of empires, which, in our eventful times, abound, it stands unmoved and immovable; while the slight edifices built by folly on the sand, the temporary fabrics of a vain, a visionary, a godless philosophy, shall crumble to atoms, and be seen no more; or if any vestiges should remain, shall be either execrated by posterity, grown wise at last by experience, as monuments of a mischievous vanity; or despised, as the ice-built, puerile play-things of infants, dissolved as soon as raised, by the sunbeams of truth, streaming from the Gospel.

In an age of sophistical insanity, you have proved yourselves wise master-builders, skilful architects, workmen that need not be ashamed; for you have built on the TRIED STONE, which, from age to age, has defied, and will defy, the waves of passion, and the winds of caprice. A fabric, founded ON THIS PRECIOUS CORNER STONE, becomes more firmly fixed by the agitation around it, and derives new stability from the force exerted for its demolition. "*Other foundation*" men, wise in their own conceits, have attempted to lay for some fantastic structure of a new-fashioned virtue and a new-fangled religion; but the result has proved the Apostle's assertion, "THAT OTHER FOUNDATION CAN NO MAN LAY, BUT THAT WHICH IS LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST: and expe-

rience will proceed to evince, That "EXCEPT THE LORD BUILD THE HOUSE, THEIR LABOUR IS BUT LOST THAT BUILD IT."

Such is the foundation of a temple truly Christian. Let us gratify the mental eye with a transient survey of the figurative superstructure. I look up with admiration at the broad expansive arch of charity, the massy columns of truth, the graceful capitals of mercy, gentleness, and compassion, the whole compactly cemented by piety and philanthropy; by a cement of godliness and love, intimately blended and tempered in a perfect, inseparable, amalgation. If it be asked, of what architectural order is the fabric? It is neither the Tuscan, the Doric, Ionic, nor the Corinthian, but it is the Composite Christian order; more beautiful in its form, more durable in its materials, than the most celebrated productions of classic antiquity, modelled in the polite schools of Athens or of Rome. And it is finished with a grace which they could only, at a distant interval, faintly and imperfectly conceive.

This allegorical exemplar has been your model, in raising the material structure which we now behold; and your hands have emulated the archetype; for you have given us beauty, deriving its chief charm from simplicity; you have exhibited the tasteful ornaments of art, chastised by the gravity and solemnity of religion. The venerable vesture which you have here assigned to her is that of the dignified matron; who, while she charms by her graceful air and the symmetry of her features, strikes an awe into the beholders by the reverend decorum of her august presence: We love her aspect, for it is lovely; but our love is controlled by veneration. So decent is the building, so appropriate all its appendages, and so benevolent its purposes, that we

humbly hope and confide that the divine Architect, on beholding the work of our hands this day completed, will vouchsafe to pronounce that it is good, and to give it his benediction.

But however good, and however beautiful; yet, perhaps, some cold-hearted objector may inquire of us, Are not the places of worship, already scattered over the land in profusion, sufficiently numerous for every rational purpose? I answer, plainly, No. And to prove the expediency of an addition to the number all over this kingdom, I allege the present unequal allotment of territory which forms the parochial districts, to which one church only is, for the most part, assigned; an inequality and disproportioned magnitude, which leaves many parts of populous parishes, and large well-inhabited hamlets, without an established place to meet in, on the Sabbath-day, for the social and united worship of their common parent and protector.

I shall not be able, from want of time, to trace, on the present occasion, the origin and progress of religious fabrics, from the tabernacle of Moses to the temple of Solomon, from the altar of green turf, or the cylindrical stone, to the gorgeous abbey and august cathedral of our own metropolis. Such an investigation might not only afford an appropriate, a rational, and instructive entertainment, but lead us to consider and admire, that HE, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, condescends, for our sake, to require particular places to be dedicated to his honour; declared his delight in them, and promised his propitious presence in them, more eminently than in any other department, throughout his own proper and boundless temple, universal space; and, I might ask, can the most bigoted idolaters of human reason (by which they usually mean their own

reason), object to the rendering of commodious buildings, erected for public worship and religious instruction, so far sacred and inviolate, as that it shall be deemed impious and sacrilegious to unhallow, or desecrate, their walls by irreverent behaviour; to pollute their shrines by words or actions, tending, in the remotest degree, to immorality; to sully their very vestibules, or even to disturb the solemn stillness of their cemeteries, by any secular and profane, though, in any other place, innocent occupation.

I might proceed to urge, if I entered at present into the full discussion of the subject, that reason gives her sanction to the consecration of place as well as of time. As one day is confessedly holier than another, so is one place; if not by nature, yet by human wisdom, as well as by divine institution. The convenience, the advantage, the decorum of society (and without decorum virtue is always exposed to danger), render the consecration of both time and place reasonable; yes, philosophically and politically reasonable, and not, in the smallest degree, under the restrictions now admitted, vain or superstitious. What, indeed, mean the words "to sanctify or consecrate," but to separate or set apart, from vulgar contamination, certain places, as well as certain times, for honourable, venerable, or religious use. But we have higher authority than human reason for both; not only for the sabbath, but for the sanctuary; and the great Lord of the Universe, for our benefit, for the salutary effects on our minds, for the sake of exciting a beneficial awe, and of keeping at a distance profane familiarity; has deigned to show a predilection for religious edifices, and for modes of worship, adorned and recommended with all that the art of man can contrive, or his

dexterity execute, the finest productions of mechanical ingenuity, the melody of music, the pathos of poetry, the sublimity of architecture, the pencil's blazonry, and the high-wrought decorations of the chisel. The fine arts, under the direction of a liberal piety (and narrow-minded piety is but Pharisaical hypocrisy), and by the appointment of Heaven, in the case of Solomon's temple, have become the diligent and useful handmaids of religion; and, indeed, whatever elevates, like the fine arts, and ennobles the mind of man, is congenial with the very nature and essence of religion, and has a direct tendency to excite, and to preserve, the glowing, aspiring, heaven-directed sentiments of a warm, rapturous, and acceptable adoration.

I might enlarge, with delight, on a subject calculated to charm every polished and elegant mind with visions of beauty and sublimity. I might conduct your imaginations through the aisles of the abbey, and point to the concave dome of the cathedral; I might bring before you the vivid images of sculptured marble on the wall, the painted canvass at the altar-piece, the storied illuminations of the window, the rich embellishments of the shrine, and all the graces of Gothic and Grecian architecture, combining, in humble, ministerial, instrumentality, to promote the sublime purposes of religion; but I return from the seductive digression, and proceed to the point I am tending to evince—the expediency, not to say the necessity, of laying more foundations like this; and of adding to the number of churches or chapels on the establishment. Whatever the indifferent or the disaffected to the church may allege in opposition, I venture to affirm that the unequal size of parishes, and the change of local population, render the erection of new places of

worship, on the establishment, in various parts of this kingdom, a grand desideratum in the present state of our ecclesiastical polity.

It is natural to inquire in this place, from what cause originated the inequality of parochial districts. Let us look back then to the age of AUGUSTINE, when he landed on the shores of Kent, and imported, not indeed the rich cargoes of East or West Indian produce, the only riches, which, in the opinion of narrow worldlings are devoutly to be wished for; but the unperishing treasures of the gospel. He came and fixed his chair in the centre of his province, the kingdom of Ethelbert, where it still stands, in all the dignity and beauty of holiness, a magnificent cathedral. From this seat of ecclesiastical authority he sent forth itinerant preachers to all the towns and villages of his province. But the great proprietors of land soon found the inconvenience of a ministry so precarious and distant, intolerable; and therefore erected churches on their own estates, and obtained for each a resident pastor, either rectorial or vicarial, either an incumbent or a substitute. Thus all the churches in the land were originally but chapels, auxiliary to their several mother churches, the cathedrals of each diocese. But the piety of those times was great; religion, the chief purpose and business of life, and the lords of the manors soon vied with each other, in endowing the churches, from their own possessions, with glebes; and rendered the parishes, however they differed in population, commensurate with their own manorial demesnes. And as their manors, of course, varied in extent, so also varied the parishes, in their boundaries; and so to this hour, they continue to vary; and for this reason, it is most desirable that there should be an addition to the auxiliary chapels, all over the king-

dom. If the spirit of piety can be kept up by zeal in ministers, it admits of no doubt, but that places of worship should be multiplied, and accommodated, in every district, to the local convenience of a faithful and devout people. What avails it that they have a parish church, if the time and labour requisite to resort to it, and return from it, are more than, in the nature of things, they can possibly spare? Tens of thousands are in this situation; condemned, amidst all the lights of Christianity, to live and die in the darkness of heathenism.

The consequence of possessing only a single church, and often a very small church, at the extremity of a very large parish, can easily be conceived: and where this is the case, many pious persons, from the cradle to the grave, have never entered their own lawful place of worship, except at their baptism and their burial: and even at these times, not without expense, labour, and difficulty. It is truly a pilgrimage, in such situations, to resort to the parish church, often situated, to add to the hardship, on a lofty eminence. The aged and the infirm, who stand most in need of religious consolation, are thus prevented for many years of declining life, from entering the sanctuary, and partaking of the holy sacrament, though they thirst after it, *like as the hart panteth for the waterbrook.*

How far the rapid increase of places of worship, unfriendly to the established church, is occasioned by a paucity of national churches, disproportioned to an augmented population; and how far it operates to the injury of the established church, and whether it does not render expedient an addition to the number of churches and chapels on the establishment, I leave to the official guardians of our ecclesiastical state. Many remarks on this subject,

which I might make, which I have made, and which I shall ever make, in the congregations committed entirely to my charge, I here purposely omit, in tenderness to some of my auditors, whose charity I revere and love, (even if they are mistaken) and with a respectful deference to the wisdom of those, whose immediate duty it is, to take care that the church shall not be in danger.

Upon the whole it appears, at least to me, that from the apathy of worldly men to all but pleasure, pomp, or riches; from the infidelity of conceited sciolists who wish to appear wiser than their neighbours; and from the enthusiasm of the more serious part of the lower orders; there is danger, lest the church, which flatters neither worldly propensities, intellectual vanity, nor fanatical extravagance, should be partially deserted. Is not the service of the church actually deserted in the afternoon, at least by the higher orders, in almost every part of the metropolis and kingdom?

It is particularly desirable, in my opinion, to multiply churches and chapels on the establishment, if it were only for the sake of counteracting the mischiefs of popular error; and of reviving, throughout all orders, a spirit of sober, yet fervent; of rational, yet scriptural, religion; and it is a subject of congratulation that we are now assembled to open a new house of prayer, not erected for the private lucre of individuals, not to make a gain of godliness, not to engage religion in the sordid service of commercial speculation, not to abuse the finest feelings of humanity, the devotional and charitable sensibilities, to the purpose of gratifying the narrow views of adventuring laymen; who, for usurious advantages, might perhaps as readily erect a crescent as a cross, a mosque as a minster, a pagoda as a St. Paul's; but

founded solely for the purpose of making piety subservient to charity, devotion instrumental to beneficence, religious instruction conducive to the relief of the wretched, and to the safety, as well as comfort, of civil society; and all this, from the most disinterested motives; the builders constituting the poor the receivers of the profits, and expending even profusely, from their own private possessions, to accomplish the benevolent design.

And with respect to the peculiar propriety of adding a chapel to this Institution, I must entreat you to attend to one circumstance, which proves, that, without a chapel, the plan of reform would have been incomplete. The children were accustomed, as you well know, to walk in procession to the parish church, situated in the great frequented street of Southwark, and at a considerable distance. There was danger in the walk, not ideal, but experienced, and real, and imminent danger, lest these thoughtless infants meeting their old companions in the way, might be seduced by them to return to the paths of wickedness and misery, which they had happily abandoned. Unfortunate indeed it was, that the laudable habit of going to church; and the very attendance at a place, where every thing good is taught; was likely, from the circumstances of public exposure in the streets, and even in the church itself, to frustrate all the purposes of this Institution, and to spread, both within doors and without, the contagion of iniquity. It was an evil which imperiously demanded a remedy. It is now supplied; and here you see the children (and a goodly sight it is) sitting in the house of prayer, as it were at home; far removed from all danger of contamination. You have brought the stray sheep, like the good shepherd, into your fold. You have gathered these little ones,

even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and guards them from the vulture, which hovers over, and watches every opportunity to devour them.

After this cursory survey of your temple, and on making various reflections as I conclude my perambulation, I think, I might term the building, if it wanted a name, and if the name which I would give it, had not been prostituted, the TEMPLE of THEOPHILANTHROPISM; for I find, according to the wise ordinances that are to regulate its use, that never will there be a religious assembly on the Lord's day, within its walls, but, at the same time that piety is offering up her sacrifices of prayer and praise, to the great Benefactor of us all; Charity will be dealing out her constant, voluntary dole, to the most hopeless and abject of all the sons and daughters of affliction, whom in the several apartments contiguous, she cherishes on her lap, and feeds from her bosom. Under this roof we shall ever pray acceptably, if charity adds efficacy to supplication, because, while we hold in one hand our book of prayer, we shall constantly offer from the other, a gift to our poor disconsolate brother and sister, and, through them, to Christ, our Intercessor. We shall not say to the destitute, be ye clothed, be ye warmed, be ye fed; but we shall actually clothe, we shall comfortably warm, we shall plentifully feed, and we shall moreover effectually heal the bruised, and bind up the broken hearted: and we know who it was that said, VERILY AS YE DID IT TO ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES YE DID IT UNTO ME.

Alms, on proper occasions, are certainly the least fallible criterion of the sincerity of prayer; and a good deed done in season, the most certain testimony of true devotion. In the age, in which we live, there is indeed a general pretension to humanity and

benevolence, but it is often a humanity without religion; a benevolence without beneficence. There is, in the circles of frivolity, a certain cant language of sympathetic tenderness, which seems satisfied with talking, or writing, or reading about it; with seeking and finding, in each little group of self-admirers, mutual applause for it; with sighing and weeping, in the sentimental luxury of fancied woe, in the delicious distresses of elegiac poetry and pathetic romance; without attempting to do any thing attended with the least trouble, or with much expense, or even a momentary interruption of amusement, for the actual and substantial alleviation of real unequivocal misery: more especially, if the objects are low, mean, and obscure, or in the smallest degree offensive, to the fastidious delicacy of affected fashion. Is this the charity of a Christian? one mite bestowed on the least of these little ones is more estimable than the whole of this sickly sensibility, on which many plume themselves, as on a symptom of fine feelings; and here the Christian law of love, as might justly be expected, displays its superiority over the wild romances, the tender tales, the philosophical reveries of this sentimental, novel-reading age; inasmuch as it does not acquiesce in certain physical feelings, in mere palpitations of the pulse, in animal emotions, in nervous vibrations, in fanciful refinements, in fashionable affectations, in ostentatious theories of romantic philosophy; but requires, that our acts of kindness should proceed from solid principle, as well as tender sensation; that every tree should be estimated by its fruits, not its blossoms; by its solid produce, not its foliage. The warmth of Christian benevolence is not a hectic; but the result of sound health in the heart and mind; a source, dispensing perennial streams of bounty,

like the pure salubrious spring in the valley, whose waters never fail to relieve the languid, and refresh the thirsty traveller; which enlivens its green margin with a gentle, yet never-ceasing current, neither exhausted in the heats of summer, nor frozen in winter, nor subjected to any change with the changing seasons.

Thus constant, thus uniform, is that benevolence which flows from principle as well as feeling; or in other words, Christian Charity. Ye visionaries, from the mountains of Switzerland, monopolizers, as ye pretend to be, of the milk of human kindness, for ever talking and writing of humanity and philanthropy, would ye, all gentle, and bland, and soothing as is the language of your systems and romances; would you deprive us of that religion which teaches not to raise airy fabrics to fancied deities, but to build, as you may here behold, these firmly founded temples of the only true God, these houses of never-failing mercy; these places of certain solace to sickly mortality, these hospitable inns for the traveller, fainting on the wearisome road of life; would ye, I say, rob us of these balsams and these anodynes, and these cordials, which Christian charity dispenses; wounded, bruised, and sore, as are the sons of men, in their conflicts with unavoidable calamity? To preserve a plausible consistency, you answer, no; you would build, but you would build on another foundation, not on our "TRIED STONE," not on our "PRECIOUS CORNER STONE, JESUS CHRIST;" but on the basis of your own newly invented philosophy; you would build temples to the goddess of reason, you would build hospitals on the system of worldly policy, on political calculation, on what you term statistical economy; that is, you would raise temples to vanity, temples to mammon, temples, I had almost said, even to

atheism; but, where would be found a temple, like this we stand in, of piety and of mercy, with houses appendant to it for the poor out-cast, admitted solely, on the plea of misery, for the love of Christ, and on the permanent and consistent principles of Christian philanthropy? All your fabrics, founded on the caprice of the moment, on mutable human passion, on secular interests, on party prejudice, on factious turbulence, would moulder away with the next revolution in politics, or at the next vicissitude of fashion, or at the will of some untried government, ever varying with the fickle humour of popular favour, the wantonness of aristocratical pride, or the sudden, and violent fluctuations of a despot's rage. The experience of a few years elapsed, and in the memory of all here present, fully confirms the Apostle's declaration, that other foundation can no man lay of a durable structure, either for the glory of God, or the benefit of man, than that which is laid, in the building where we are now assembled, even Jesus Christ.

From the house of God, let us now descend to view the house of the poor, contiguous to it; the commodious receptacles of those, who, plucked as firebrands from the fire, rescued from imminent destruction, find here all that can restore them to lost virtue, and to that, which, with the loss of virtue, is sure to depart, the peace of innocence and the sweet satisfaction of conscious integrity. I pause a moment, as I enter the doors of the house of mercy, to read the title and superscription. This friendly brotherhood I read, is a "SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRIMES, BY THE ADMISSION OF THE OFFSPRING OF CONVICTS, AND FOR THE REFORM OF CRIMINAL POOR CHILDREN."

PREVENTION and REFORM! It is enough; these two words are, in their import voluminous. Surely

nothing more needs be said in its praise. God and man immediately set their seal of approbation. God will indubitably give his blessing, and man cannot withhold his contribution to it. PREVENTION and REFORM! Your Institution then is a moral infirmary, administering medicines to the mind, both with anticipating and retro-active efficacy. Can man do more? In thus imitating the divine beneficence, does not man become as it were, (with all humility be it uttered,) a god to his fellow mortal?

There are indeed some things so evidently good, that to point out their excellence, in the language of studied eulogium, is not only superfluous; but, in some measure, derogatory from their acknowledged glory. It would seem as if they wanted the colours of rhetoric; as if their excellence were not visible, till magnified by a glass; as if their beauty required the extrinsic embellishments of a meretricious attire. To name this establishment, as we have seen, is to pronounce its panegyric. Sufficient would it be for all purposes of recommendation to the notice and the patronage of Christians, throughout Christendom, to wave our white banner over the portal of the edifice, with an inscription, as it claims, in letters of gold. "TO OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN SACRED; TO OUR BROTHER ON EARTH (BOTH THE UNFORTUNATE AND THE GUILTY) A REFUGE AND REFORM." Not a syllable more is necessary, to induce every sincere lover of Jesus, and of his brother, who goes by the way side, and has the power of communicating a share of the good he enjoys, to drop his mite into your treasury. He must be anxious, even for his own sake, to partake in the blessedness of being instrumental to a work, which the benignant Deity, we presume, beholds with complacency. If all men were sincere in their professions of Christianity, the work would be instantly

and completely finished, as soon as noticed, (as far as pecuniary contribution is required) and the necessity of addressing you from this place, on this occasion, for eleemosynary gifts, entirely superseded.

But I am aware, the solemnity of such occasions as these, requires an address from the pulpit; and I therefore have advanced thus far, and shall proceed with due diffidence; though, as the nature and beneficial effects of the Institution are no less clear than the great luminary above us, I own, I am not convinced, especially in such an audience, that it can be necessary. A laudable custom has, however, rendered addresses to willing benefactors expected; and though they afford not much information, and may as exhortations, be superfluous; yet they may be useful in calling vague attention to subjects, which, wanting the grace of novelty, are sometimes disregarded.

I shall, therefore, in respectful attention to the appointed solemnity, proceed in my labour of love; and follow, in imagination, the steps of the projectors and founders of this Charity, when they first set out on their blessed progress of benevolence. I see them stooping down to enter the abode of disease, and famine, and guilt, and despair. They descend into the dreary, loathsome cell, messengers of Heaven, furnished with ample stores of food and medicine, and with soothing words of consolation. They went forth like him who brought *healing in his wings.* They traced, with the keen sagacity of affectionate, philanthropic ardour, the footsteps of affliction, marked as it was by tears, to her hiding place, in the obscurest outskirts of the great city. They caught a view of the pale, emaciated, squalid infant; pining with pestilence, inhaling putridity, clothed in rags, ghastly, sickly, full of sores; not only unknowing

where to find a medicine for his sickness, and a salve for his sores, but even sustenance, the little pittance nature wants for the passing day—therefore tempted (but it was through hunger) to pilfer a morsel of bread,—but it was only a morsel; or, through cold (and bitter blew the blast,)—a covering; (but it was a tattered covering) or some vile, neglected article, (dreadful expedient!) to barter for either; and instantly seized for the theft, and held fast by the iron grasp of justice. They look through the massy bars; they see a guilty infant prostrate on the earth; they listen—they hear him clank his chains; they listen again, for hark! he groans, and the iron enters into his soul, and at the same time, pierces their own. Venerable are our laws. May Heaven guard them! The legislature must be uniform and impartial in its penal inflictions. The magistrate must be just: HE BEARETH NOT THE SWORD IN VAIN. The law must take its course. Society demands a sacrifice; but the gospel and royal clemency ever delighting in the prerogative of forgiveness, rescue the forlorn infant; and allow him time for repentance and reformation. Your gates instantly fly open. A soul is saved. Heaven gives its plaudit to the pardon, and angels and spirits made perfect, chant hymns of joy around the throne of mercy.

Behold another—a helpless, houseless, friendless, fatherless, child of affliction:—fatherless—for the law has justly claimed the father as its victim. The father is gone for ever. The melancholy spectacle is just over. The gaping crowd are returned from the dismal scene. Whither shall the innocent offspring fly for refuge? The finger of scorn points at him, and upbraids him with ignominy, not his own, but the ignominy of his father! He flies, like the poor hunted animal in the forest, to the deepest obscurity,

covered with shame, there to pine or starve in hopeless solitude, or come forth boldly, and commit a crime. The world knows him not, pities him not, owns him not; but ye know him, ye pity him, ye own him. Poor child of sorrow, baptized, if baptized at all—with the tears of a widowed mother; naked, literally naked, in a bleak exposure to all the inclement winds that blow; "Come hither, poor hapless boy," exclaims in blandest accents, the voice of CHARITY. Come hither, child; for here Philanthropy hath built thee an house, and opens her doors, and her arms to receive thee, when every other door, and every other hand, and every other heart, is shut against thee. She soothes and fosters thee, on thy first arrival, even as thine own mother pitied her innocent babe when he hung at her breast. Then she gradually teaches thee to know right from wrong—to fear God—and to respect the rights, and claims, and comforts of thy fellow-creature. She bids thee be industrious; and, to enable thee to be so, she gives thee a skill in arts, that thou mayest be usefully and successfully industrious; gives thee that fine preservative of us all from flagitious degeneracy, a due degree of self-esteem, which arises from the consciousness of being useful, of possessing some place and estimation in the society of mortals around thee; some reputable station in the grand system of human affairs; teaches thee to feel the pleasure of honesty, the sweet satisfaction of self-dependence, under divine Providence; teaches thee to live with comfort, nay with credit, in thy humble sphere, and to die, in the course of nature, with the hope of heaven.

The latter of these two descriptions, came hither, it is true, comparatively innocent; but, consider how likely he was to be corrupted by the influence of the

unfortunate parent's connections, to be rendered desperate by contempt, disgrace, and insult, having little or no hope of an honest maintenance, even of a morsel of bread or a tattered garment (under these circumstances), but by depredation, by secret fraud, or by open violence.

But let us proceed in our progress to the house of reform. Reform! What is it but religion, combining with legislation, not only to promote its best purposes, but to supply those defects of human laws, which, in every thing human and sublunary, are inevitable? Who but a Draco or a cannibal, would wish to punish (and to punish with exile or death) when he has it in his power, by the exercise of wisdom and charity, to prevent both the evil of punishment and the evil of crime; both of them, in the eyes of philanthropy and philosophy, evils of great magnitude. Policy, is no less concerned than charity in the reform. An useful subject saved to the state, is an acquisition truly valuable, when all are wanted, both for the purpose of contributing to national wealth and to national defence. The reform is, indeed, the grand prominent purpose and benefit of this wise as well as charitable Institution. The reform reaches even the soul. View it in that awful light, in order duly to appreciate its value. Souls are saved from perdition by the same friendly deliverers who snatch the body from a gibbet; and it is impossible for an observing eye not to advert to the wisdom with which the whole plan of reform is conducted, by men, not recluses and dreamers, such as founded monasteries; but, men experienced in life and manners, men versed in affairs, men who have perhaps felt, as well as remarked, the vicissitudes of many-coloured life, men acquainted practically, not merely by theory, with the world and human nature, at the same time

that they are enlightened and animated by the truths of the gospel. Mark the superior wisdom of the disciples of experience, over the speculatists of the closet or the monastic cloister. The men of experience, it is true, give to the pauper education. Yes: but not education of the mind with bodily inactivity. Education in the way of industry, said the great judge Hale, is the way to empty our gaols of malefactors, and our streets of vagrants. Education of the poor outcast in idleness, that is, the education of coarse, vulgar minds, of minds accustomed by necessity and by example to coarse, vulgar habits, without manual employment, such employment as occupies attention, withdraws from evil company, and gives ability to procure an honest livelihood, may, and has often, effected the reverse. It may add craft to the knave, give the plausibilities of address to the swindler, increase the spirit of enterprise in the robber, and facilitate to each the means of evading detection. Here then, in this house of piety, charity, and wisdom, are made the best provision possible for the peace, good order, and security of society, and for the welfare of the immediate objects of its care, both in the present life and the future: employment, honest, creditable, useful, profitable; instruction, plain, pious, necessary, and no more. What was a Solon or a Lycurgus to the scholars of the school of Christ, the philanthropists of our own age and nation, illuminated by grace? What is a taper to the sun?

The whole system before us tends to the recovery of lost virtue, and the prevention of future vice; to teach the fear of God, and a religious regard to the safety and advantage of society. You will, indeed, find a very intimate connection in the work of reform, between the chapel and the manufactory, the bending

of the knees and the labour of the hands, the solemn hymns of devotion and the cheerful carols of industry. Believe me, the voice of joy and gladness is to be found in the manufactory, as well as in the chapel. Industry, innocence, and cheerfulness are nearly allied; and piety, at stated returns, within these walls, confirms and harmonizes the happy union. And, with respect to the efficiency of the labour here exercised, you will judge of the skill and exertion displayed in the manufactory, by the pecuniary profits (and it is a result most honourable to the conductors) which already contribute no inconsiderable sum towards the great and unavoidable expenses of this well-concerted Institution.

I have yet said nothing of the female objects of the charity. Neither is there any occasion to enlarge on the topic. They certainly want no advocates with the men. I should blush to be under the necessity of recommending, by argument or persuasion, any unfortunate female, especially in the tender age of infancy, deserted infancy, orphan infancy, to any one who calls himself a man; and their own sex, as appears by the roll of subscribers, has shown, most effectually its amiable dispositions, by substantial tokens of peculiar favour, and most bountiful patronage. Charity is, indeed, among the lovely graces and virtues which render the women of Britain exemplary in every quarter of the globe; where it is at present deplorable to behold, in proportion as religion has declined and lost its influence on manners, enormous and unprecedented examples of female depravity. The corruption of the best things, says a maxim of scholastic wisdom, is the worst corruption; and may that sanctity of manners which results from religious faith and awe, ever keep from our island, what some have attempted to intro-

duced into it, the libertine character of a female free-thinker.

Upon a review of the whole subject, and a consideration of the benefits arising to the individual and to the community from this Institution, what shall we say in honour of the institutors? How shall we adequately commend this society of merciful men, ingenious, as they are, in devising new modes of doing good, studying, as the business of their lives; labouring, as in their professions and daily occupations, to find the means of alleviating the woes of their fellow-man, "a mourner in his best estate." For my own part, I shrink from the task, and avow myself, as I feel, incompetent to do it justice. All language, but the language of the heart, must fail in its efforts fully to describe, and adequately to praise, virtue so pure, benevolence so godlike, bounty so large. Under this inability, it is a consolation to me to reflect, that the praise of man is comparatively of little value. Yet I will say, that every honoured name, (and, in my estimation, they are all honoured,) which I see in the subscription roll, I consider as both a seal and signature, an attestation and certificate of the tried and proved utility of this establishment; and at the same time, as an example to mankind illustriously honourable to human nature. Verily they are not without their reward. Sweet is the recollection at the close of day, sweet too at the close of life, of good deeds done in the spirit of Christian philanthropy—and there is an hour coming to us all, when the very best of us will be glad to look back to any good, however little, we may have done in this short life, hoping to propitiate the great Judge at the awful tribunal. You, I trust, ye merciful men, will find much on a retrospect, to afford you consolation!

Well done, ye good and faithful servants, shall be your salutation. What is human praise in comparison with this celestial plaudit? I will not then attempt your praise. I will not give you pain by dwelling, in your presence, on a topic, the only one which intimately concerns your favourite Institution, on which its feeble advocate would be heard by you, with impatience.

Happily this day and this occasion afford others also, an excellent opportunity of sharing, in the good work, and the rewards of it; the approbation of God, and the applause of conscience. To these, I might say, give us some token of your good will, some proof, that accident only, or inadvertency, has hitherto prevented you from adding your contribution. But no; think not I will so far insult any individual in this crowded assembly, as to supplicate his bounty. You require, I am convinced, while you look around you, and reflect on what you see, neither petition nor exhortation. None will I offer; because I am unwilling to offend you by an importunity which might imply a suspicion that you are deficient in that, with which I presume you abound; (at least when you enter these walls) the spirit of Christian or universal love. But yet I will take the liberty to suggest, that the occasion is extraordinary; that, in all its circumstances, it never can recur in this place: that the eyes of men, of neighbours, of sectaries, perhaps of rivals, (a small consideration comparatively, but yet a consideration) as well as the eyes of the all-seeing God, are now upon us: that a good commencement has ever been found by experience, auspicious to a good progress and a happy termination; that to begin well is to set out with an *impetus*, which cannot fail to carry us forward rapidly and successfully to the completion of our course. Extraordinary

occasions, you will allow, call for extraordinary exertions; and, when charity is concerned, for exemplary acts of munificence.

But I pause. I pause from a conviction that the whole of this topic is superfluous. For to whom am I speaking? To men who constitute a part of a nation which may be called a nation of philanthropists. Charity, humanity, generosity, and all the nobler virtues of the heart are, at this hour, the acknowledged characteristics of our country, in the eyes of all Europe; and they are the genuine result of its religion, still preserved with exemplary faith and purity, and let me add without an apology, of its civil constitutional liberty. These, (inestimable jewels as they are) it has still retained, amid the conflicts and confusion of the world around; and these, more than any thing else, are perfective of human nature. These are yours; at once your happiness and your glory. It is enough that you are Britons. I leave the cause of which I am the advocate, entirely to your hearts, without solicitude for the issue. I anticipate the result. Distress never yet sued to you in vain. In times most unfavourable to liberality, you received your enemies into your bosoms; and when they were exiles and vagabonds, they found all the security and comfort of a home, in your comprehensive philanthropy. Yes; when I name the name of Englishmen, and remark the degenerate state of morals and religion, at this portentous period, over the whole terraqueous globe, more particularly in Europe and in Africa, I say—be proud of your country and your appellation; for in them is involved the character of men, who, amidst the unspeakable corruptions of surrounding nations, preserve, more than all others that it has been my lot to hear or read of, the divine image undefaced.

Certainly, in no country under heaven is the life of man, the property of man, the liberty of man, the individual man, and all that concerns the comfort, the accommodation, and the safety of man, in private life, so valued, so respected, so protected, and so religiously preserved inviolate, as in this favoured island, this happy country, where religion and liberty, harassed as they are over the wide world, have found their last asylum; and I do firmly believe, that the virtue of this nation, religious and moral, like the salt of the earth, spoken of in Scripture, preserves the rest from utter corruption, and averts the thunderbolt of the Almighty.

What, though there occasionally arise among us some instances of singular degeneracy? An exception which, from its rarity, strikes the attention, confirms the rule. Not even the influx of riches from all regions of the earth, not even our consequent political corruptions, have yet been able to efface the deeply engraven marks of the national character, the manly features of our forefathers. The Christian religion, in all its purity, is still believed, revered, and (human infirmity excepted) still practised too, among the people at large. Freedom still flourishes; and, like the palm tree, preserves, under every weight suspended on its branches, its own native elasticity. All therefore, I trust, is safe, amid surrounding danger; and, so long as we preserve our religion and our laws, we may still confidently, yet humbly, rely on that favour of Heaven, which has to this hour, while all Europe is in a state of conflagration, preserved this island from becoming the seat of war; a mercy, for which we ought to pour daily hymns of gratitude to the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the only Ruler of Princes. Let us persevere, in holding fast that

religion, and that happy constitutional freedom, from which our national virtues have originated; and we shall still conciliate the favour of Heaven, and preserve, among the nations, our glorious preeminence —the preeminence of virtue—the distinction of faith, hope, and charity. Gracious God! may we never relinquish our religion, that sure anchor in the storms and tempests of a turbulent world. For ever may the British nation continue, as it is at present, one grand Philanthropic Society; of which I consider you as the delegated, or rather voluntary representatives. Go on and prosper; and be assured that the palaces of the poor, which stand so thick, like ramparts round our great city, will be stronger castles and fortresses, if they draw down the favour and tutelary protection of the God of Hosts, than the tower of the capital, with all its embattlements clothed with artificial thunder.

Proceed, therefore, in your work of benevolence, and be not weary of well-doing. But, why exhort you? Your activity and your bounty have anticipated exhortation from the pulpit (for till this day ye had not a pulpit), and your perseverance supersedes, at least on this occasion, its necessity. We trust the completion and the extension of the good work to the same virtuous and liberal dispositions, to which it owes its origin, its progressive advancement, and its present flourishing condition. Thanks be to God, it does flourish; and I venture to predict, it shall flourish more and more, like the cedars of Lebanus, and as the cypress trees upon the mountains of Hermon.

I will, therefore, add no more, but conclude, as I began, with a supplication to the Most High, who delights in mercy and in merciful men, that he would look down with peculiar favour on this house, and

grant that it may be perpetual; dedicated for ever, as it is opened, for the first time, this day, to Charity and to Prayer. May he pour down the sweet influence of his loving spirit on the appointed teachers; causing the instructions to be afforded from this place, to diffuse universal philanthropy among the sons of men, in every clime and of every colour; persuading them to love one another, as Christ has loved us, to conciliate, to pacify, to relent, to forgive; and to say to the sword, in the words of the prophet Jeremiah, O THOU SWORD, HOW LONG WILL IT BE ERE THOU ART QUIET; PUT UP THYSELF INTO THY SCABBARD, REST AND BE STILL. May the example of this Institution, and the doctrines taught from this pulpit, proceed auspiciously from age to age, to convince the world that all men, however divided by oceans, ought to be philanthropists; that man, born of woman, who hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery, was not formed to be the enemy of man; but the brother, the friend, the protector, the guardian, and the guide. May the prayers, together with the alms now offered, and to be for ever offered, from this sanctuary, ascend to heaven, as incense; and, while they bring down blessings on the institutors, blessings on the worshippers, and blessings on the poor objects of their charity, open the gates of that celestial mansion, where shall be no more misery to relieve, and where philanthropy shall be completely gratified, in finding all moral and all natural evil cease, under the eternal reign of the supreme lover of men, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer.

SERMON XXVII.

THE SUPPORT OF THE MAGDALEN HOSPITAL RECOMMENDED.

[Preached at the Chapel of the Magdalen Hospital on the Anniversary, 1812.]

JOHN, xi. 33.—*When Jesus saw Mary weeping, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled.*

THIS remarkable emotion in the mind of our Saviour terminated in a flood of tears; and some interpreters in ancient times, have been greatly perplexed by the passage; conceiving that tears, the natural effect of grief and pity, were unworthy the character of their Lord, and detracted much from his personal dignity. In their zeal for the honour of Christ some of them had been presumptous enough to erase from the New Testament, not without sentiments of indignation, the disgraceful verse, as they conceived it, in which it was related that "Jesus wept;" thus, with the awkward hand of officious correction, defacing that beautiful picture of our Saviour which the spirit of God had delineated, with perfect simplicity, in the Gospel. They knew not that tears of compassion can never be symptoms of an unbecoming debility, and that the sacred fountain which flows from the heart, through the channel of the eyes, is among the most honourable distinctions of human nature. But the mistake of those who thus took offence at a weeping Saviour arose from considering him solely in the high character of his unblended Divinity. It may be proper therefore to premise a remark on the divinity and humanity of Christ, before we consider that propensity to pity and sym-

pathetic feeling which distinguished his ministry, and which may furnish an appropriate topic for our present contemplation; because it was an humble imitation of that sympathy which raised the roof under which we are now assembled.

The union of divinity and humanity in our Lord is indeed a high and mysterious point in Christian theology; but not effected in him, as certain heretics of antiquity supposed, by substituting the divine spirit in the place of the rational soul of man; for such a substitution would indeed have degraded his divinity, by rendering it obnoxious to passion, and at the same time overwhelmed or absorbed his humanity. The true doctrine seems therefore to be, according to our excellent church, founded on the Scripture, that the human nature in our Lord was complete; that he was truly a man; consisting of a rational soul and a human body; and that his divinity was superadded by the communication of the holy spirit; superadded in a degree infinitely greater than in any son of Adam, so that while it was compatible with real and complete humanity, it exempted him from the possibility of sin, and rendered him capable of the finest sensibilities of human nature without a participation of its infirmity.

To him the Holy Spirit of God was communicated, not as to us, by measure, but in unlimited plenitude; and indeed this union in our Lord of the spirit of God with the rational soul of man, differed only in degree, from that communion of the same spirit, which is the acknowledged privilege of every believer under the operation of divine grace.

So that Jesus, elevated as he was to divinity, by a superior participation of the Holy Spirit, was still completely a man; and, as we learn from the sacred

history, felt as a man the sentiment of compassion. This clearly appears from the tenor of his life narrated in the gospel; and we are expressly told by the Apostle to the Hebrews, that he was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He felt pity; pity is a lovely sentiment, yet most truly a passion; and the gospel records instances enough to prove that our Saviour indulged this passion in its fullest force. He said himself, on one occasion, I have compassion on the multitude; and performed a stupendous miracle to gratify the impulse; again we are told, Jesus moved with compassion, put forth his hand to the kneeling leper, and saith to him, Be thou clean. On many other occasions he felt and acted so as to combine with the tenderness of a human philanthropist the power of the great God Almighty.

Never, surely, did the adorable Author of our religion appear in a light more amiable than when his humanity sympathized with the suffering of some wretched mortal in this vale of woe. And we must remember, that he came to teach us by his example as well as by his doctrine; and who is there among his faithful followers, looking down from the superior height of fortune, rank and education, on the miseries of the wandering multitude below, but must feel a sentiment of pity, and wish to relieve their distresses; to rectify their errors, to call them home to the good Shepherd, who has promised to feed and refresh them in the green pasture by the side of the waters of life?

In humble imitation of our Saviour's example, and in obedience to his precepts, we are this day assembled to promote a charitable institution which takes compassion on those whom we have every

reason to believe He, with all his purity and superiority, would have pitied and relieved. There is a well-known fact related in the gospel, from which the Institution derives its name, and which justifies our belief, that the penitents of this house would have excited his compassion. This Institution has indeed now stood the test of time, has often been powerfully recommended to you from this place, and is still well and wisely supported. An address indeed is required on these annual solemnities; but it is now made rather in conformity to a laudable practice at the commencement of it, than from any conviction of its absolute necessity at present; rather to remind you of what you know than with the hope of throwing new light on an exhausted subject, or of suggesting fresh topics of persuasion to the minds of those whose fostering bounty and parental patronage most clearly evince that they are already and most completely persuaded.

Nevertheless, it is at all times meet and right, and our bounden duty, to teach and preach the prime indispensable evangelical doctrine of Christian charity, previously therefore to adverting to the particular Institution for which I am this day to solicit your additional support, I shall exhort you to improve the fine feelings of sympathy, which you derive from a kindly nature, to a gospel virtue; to meliorate the wild stock of native sensibility by grafting upon it the grace of charity, by refining and subliming it with the spirit of Christian love, and by advancing a capricious sentiment to the dignity of a religious principle. Thus will your affections become auxiliaries to virtue, and nature lead directly to grace.

The life, the very soul and essence of the Christian religion, as you well know, is benevolence and love;

that powerful agent in the moral world, which like the elastic fluid of the philosophers in the physical, animates, connects, and ennobles the whole system of intelligent nature.

It does indeed plainly appear, that charity is represented in the gospel, as a duty no less necessary than justice, as a mutual right, and reciprocal claim of humanity. Under the gospel it may be authoritatively declared, no duty can be less safely evaded, or with less impunity violated. They indeed, who can imagine themselves Christians, and yet continue in a spirit and in practices contrary to charity, may at the same time, fancy themselves good and religious persons, though they live in the actual and constant commission of the greatest crimes; and if such can tranquillize their consciences, and evade the law of love, as promulgated in the gospel, they may with equal facility infringe every law, and justly arrogate to themselves a notable discovery, the art of becoming Christians without Christianity.

I may then with confidence affirm, that in mercy to ourselves and our own souls, we must take especial heed, that whatever we bestow on this, or any other occasion, with a profession of charity, proceed from the right principle, which is no other in a Christian man, than the pure spirit of Christian love; no other than goodness of heart, inspired or improved by gospel grace.

Goodness, indeed, after all the honours lavished on greatness, by orators and poets, and painters and sculptors, is doubtless the most brilliant ornament; the last polish and perfection of human nature, and what is goodness but a disposition of the heart to produce good and to diminish evil? and what good so great as the happiness of a human being, what evil so sore as misery? But goodness, firm in the

principle, and uniform in the practice, is neither taught by nature nor by philosophy. It is the lesson learned in the school of Christ; of him who begins the work of improving human nature, by meliorating the heart; by purifying and sweetening the fountain from which all genuine virtue (and I speak not of the glittering counterfeits which pass current in the world) must originally and purely, and solely emanate.

He who gives then, on occasions like these, even with lavish munificence, from vain glory, does not give, but sells his favour, for popular applause. He who gives with an ill grace, and solely because he is importuned, does not give, but purchases, at an equivalent price, exemption from trouble. He who gives in requital for former service, does not give, but pays a debt and ungenerously deems it a favour. He who gives to confer an obligation, hoping to receive, at a future time, a greater gift, does not give, but places out his money usuriously, taking advantage of another's indigence. All these givers may perhaps do good by their gifts; yet, paradoxical as it may appear, they do good, without doing a good deed, because the corruption of the motive vitiates the virtue.

But charity, the kind, friendly, philanthropic disposition of one human being to another, superinduced by grace, adds an intrinsic value to every act even of the purest morality. It refines and exalts human nature by a kind of amalgamation of it with a particle of the divine, causing a resemblance and approximation to Deity, for in the energetic language of Scripture, God himself is love. Man without it, gradually degenerates, even to a brutal nature; with it, he becomes little lower than an angel. The spirit of real charity pervades, vivifies, and hallows every relative duty. When it looks up to God, it is piety

or reverential affection; when it refers to man, it is humanity; to superiors, respect; to inferiors, humility; to equals, courtesy; to the poor, bounty; to the stranger, hospitality; to the neighbour, kind offices—and to the delinquent, mercy, pardon, reconciliation.

Such is charity; too little understood by the multitude. A donation—a mere pittance—thrown into the receptacle at the temple gate, for form's sake, for decency's sake, in compliance with custom, obtains the name and the praise of charity. Deplorable mistake; for charity is a kind, softened, subdued, affectionate heart; a divine gift, improving on humanity, an evangelical grace; the very spirit of our Lord and Saviour. I may give all my goods to feed the poor, and yet have not in my selfish, obdurate bosom, one atom of charity. Though much may be given by man, yet not a particle of the gift may be acceptable to God; who seeth in secret, and appreciates the motives. It may, according to the Wise Man's expression, be bread cast upon the waters; and yet cast away entirely and for ever. It is lost, as far as concerns the donor, who gives indeed his gold and silver, a valuable gift in the world's eye; but gives it without charity, and annihilates the virtue. It is the affectionate heart, urged to act by the Christian principle, which transmuted the widow's mite into a talent of gold; and the cup of cold water into a cordial of life; both of them, however small the gift in the eye of men, the most celebrated acts of munificence in the world's whole history.

But enough on the general topic of charity, more than enough I am conscious, before those, many of whom, by their long, uniform, habitual beneficence,

have shown that they are already well acquainted with its nature, and better qualified to give than to receive a practical lesson of benevolence.

From the general subject, I am naturally led to the particular Institution, which calls upon us this day to practise our principles, and evince the spirit of the gospel, by imitating the compassionate tenderness of him whose mercy to Mary Magdalen suggested the foundation and gave it its name.

The original facts recorded in the gospel, and the thousand facts that have succeeded of a similar kind within these walls, owe their origin to Christ's compassion, I must attribute this, and the various other houses of mercy, which mark this vicinity in particular, and our country in general, wholly and solely to the Christian religion. You will allow me to identify the spirit of Christ, with Christ himself; and the works done in consequence of that spirit's operation, with the works of love and mercy done by himself, when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and man beheld his glory full of grace and truth. And in this sense I may say with confidence it is He that founded, it is He that endowed, it is He that supports all these mansions of mercy, all these heaven-directed monuments of charity, which every where adorn our nation, and constitute the glory of the Christian name. They testify that the spirit of Christ is still with us; that our Lord and Saviour still does mighty works of mercy among us; and whatever names may appear recorded on the mural inscriptions of the eleemosynary fabrics around, the founder is Christ; the charter the gospel; His the work; be His the glory.

And here it is impossible not to remark the benignity of our Saviour to the woman mentioned in the gospel, and his lenity in particular to female delinquency. It was singularly tender, compas-

sionate and amiably venerable. He displayed it on several occasions; and the history of the penitent and affectionate Mary, fully justifies and strongly recommends the peculiar mode of charity cherished in this hospital. The soothing words which he spake on that occasion, still strike the ear of the repentant sinner, like the sweetest melody, and though they encourage not presumption, yet they dissipate the clouds of despair, and justify us even in extreme cases, in diffusing the sunshine of hope, and promising to penitence, pardon and peace.

There have been times in our own country when stern virtue, austere sanctity, turned away from the deplorable suppliant, the frail and fallen sister, the child of penury and sorrow, with all the apathy of pride, as an object too loathsome for the supercilious eye of virtuous pity. In the days of our forefathers, when ostentatious piety was a courtly fashion, a piety blended with excessive rigour of an apparent morality; a morality, which comprehended not the imbecilities of compassion; it was deemed meritorious to triumph over the fallen; to persecute the prostrate penitent, the almost infantine victim perhaps of another's vices, even with ecclesiastical censure and public penance; to leave her to her sufferings, to deem her out of the pale of charity, to prohibit the poor solace of sympathy and withhold a single mite from the polluted hand to save the unhallowed miscreant even from famine; at a time too when there were no poor laws, and little claim to parochial assistance. And this severity of indignant virtue, this over acted delicacy of outrageous honour, plumed itself on a fancied perfection of religious excellence, approaching to the angelic. Not to forgive, as we would hope to be forgiven, seemed to be, in puritanical times, exemplary religion. Religion did I say?

It was in truth atheism and barbarity, under the semblance of sainthood; holding in one hand a scourge of scorpions, and in the other (with all the attitudes and grimaces of devotion,) the book of prayer and God's charter of mercy to man. What if the measure, with which they meted to a wretched sister, a penitent and a suppliant, should in the hour of their utmost need, be measured to them again! Then would they be tempted to say, in the language of the prophet, to the hills "cover us," and to the mountains "fall on us."

Happy they who in a more liberal and enlightened age, have not so learned Christ, as to have forgotten the imbecility of our common nature, forgotten their own want of forgiveness, the sins of their youth, and their own misery and dependance. How little do the implacable avengers of their fellow mortal's delinquency recollect the Apostle's words, so strikingly introduced and so emphatically pronounced, "This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" a passage to be considered, whenever objections are made to this Institution, by the spiritual pride of the over-righteous Pharisee. Christ came into the world to save sinners, and to accomplish his benignant purpose, we are expressly told, conversed with publicans and sinners; for they that were whole needed not a physician, but they that were sick. As a physician of souls, his treatment of the weaker patient, we have seen, was peculiarly mild and parental. Pure as the holy spirit of heaven was his moral doctrine, and spotless his life as the crystalline eye, yet was it totally exempt from rigour. Innocent himself, a true Lamb of God; yet could he view the sinner with strong feelings of compassion; and so also must his

faithful followers, if they hope to partake the mercies of the gospel, which they will one day implore.

But let a cautionary suggestion be in this place interposed, to guard against mistake: our charity to the persons and the souls of sinners must not, in the smallest degree, diminish a just abhorrence of the sin and the shame of immorality; and it is a wise regulation of human society, a rule never to be violated, that the notoriously vicious are to be kept with strict decorum at a due distance, and prohibited, yet not with rudeness or harshness, all equality and familiarity of indiscriminate association. This law of human intercourse is a strong fence and barrier of virtue; but perfectly consistent with the nicest observance of it is the other indispensable law, the law of love, which our Saviour came into the world purposely to promulgate and countenance. The decencies of life, the dignity, the reserve of immaculate virtue, must be sacredly maintained; and acts of charity to the sinner come with peculiar grace and effect from those who do maintain them inviolate, with the pure delicacy of innocence, and all the matron-like majesty of habitual rectitude. Let virtue then continue like the sun, to shine with undiminished glory; a glory all her own; but be it remembered, that the sun, without losing any thing of its lustre, irradiates the darkest clouds, and unsusceptible of pollution, emits its rays, with indiscriminate light and heat, on the noisome nettle and the rose of Sharon. So is it no derogation from the beauty of virtue, that from her awful eminence, she looks down with a tear of pity and a smile of charity, on the wretchedness of vice, while, like the sensitive plant, she shrinks from its proximity and shudders at its contagion.

With pleasure I behold this assembly of Christians, within these walls, who exhibit in their conduct of this charity, the just and delicate discrimination which I have described. Their abhorrence of the turpitude of the transgression increases, rather than destroys, their commiseration of the transgressor; for they are aware that no evil is so much an object of a Christian's pity, as a state of sin unrepented. They know that moral evil aggravates all physical evil. Their religion is the religion of Christ, and the religion of men; men, not indulging visionary ideas of unattainable purity and perfection, but making every candid allowance for human infirmity. They come not from the chillness of the cloister or the seclusion of the cell; but have studied man, amid the haunts of man, as he really exists, in the many-coloured affairs and vicissitudes of real life. They have duly considered the errors of youth, the impetuosity of passion, the peculiar disadvantage under which poverty and ignorance labour, with respect to the preservation of innocence, the carelessness of parents in humble life, the forlorn state of the orphan, and the illegitimate foundling, thrown into the wide world, without a guide or protector, often without a parent or a friend; they have considered also the aid which one human being is enabled, by a few temporal and external advantages, to afford to another; and, above all, they have sought and obtained, by prayer and alms, the benevolent spirit of the gospel, which they profess to believe, and which they know to be all friendly to man, full of love and mercy; not extreme to mark what is done amiss, but offering pardon, without limits, to repentance without hypocrisy. Thus, it appears, they have thought, thus they have felt, thus they have acted; and lo! here is the result; a house

of God, and a house of mercy, with a goodly establishment, that has subsisted, (affording blessings innumerable and inestimable to thousands of sufferers,) during the space of more than half a century. They have not, like the modern philosophers, rested in speculation; they have not acquiesced in reading, or hearing, or writing, or applauding, declamatory panegyrics on benevolence and universal philanthropy, so general, universal, and comprehensive as not to attend to particulars, but have actually done the good which they contemplated with complacency. No fallacy is here, and there can be no deception. We stand at this moment under their sheltering roof, we see their arrangements, we know that the recipients of their benefits are personally present, in the act of returning thanks to God and them for protection, and for the opportunity of returning to innocence; all whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace. What have we to do this day, the visitors and strangers, but to imitate their example, by contributing a share to the work, and partaking in the satisfaction of this their labour of love.

What sore evils, what pungent sorrows, that labour of love is calculated to remove or to alleviate, I shall not, on the present occasion, attempt to describe. The melancholy sombrous picture of the Magdalen's sorrows has often been exhibited from this place; and I fear I shall weary the constant attendants in this house of prayer and mercy, were I again to present to view my imperfect delineation of scenes, which by this time have become familiar even to satiety. Who indeed can adequately paint the agony of a father's and a mother's heart, who sees a daughter, the lamb fostered in their bosoms, still an object of love to them at least, become an outcast, a vaga-

bond, a hireling of lawless profligacy and brutality, the most forlorn and helpless of the human species; with a form perhaps tremulously tender, at an age which the laws consider and treat as infancy; little able to bear the slightest breath, yet exposed, without shelter or refuge, to the bitterest blast of adversity.

Can a man born as he is of a woman; a man, recollecting the tender ties of a mother, a wife, a sister; a man owing, as we all do, so much from the cradle to the grave, to the care, the peculiar skill and tenderness of women, in sickness and in health, in prosperity and adversity, in all circumstances and situations in life; can any man, I say, thus allied and circumstanced, and who is not thus circumstanced, behold an unfortunate, however blameable, tribe of females, such as a corrupt metropolis must always exhibit, in extreme distress, whose poverty and hard necessity is often the sole cause of their continuing a life of infamy and woe, penitent too, without an endeavour at least to rescue them—without holding out the hand to lift up the poor shivering sufferer from the mire of sin and misery, the gulf of perdition? I will not insult human nature, by asking the question.

Now this before us is an association of Christian men; men, who prove their claim to the manly character and the Christian character, by their compassion to women, of whom we, the hardier sex, are constituted by God and nature the protectors and defenders, under all the attacks to which their weakness is particularly exposed. And what joy is theirs, when they restore her who was lost, but is found, to the eager arms of the forgiving father, and to the fostering bosom of some wretched Rachel, who is

weeping, not because her child is not, for that were sometimes comparatively a happy consummation, but because she was lost to all that rendered life comfortable, creditable, tolerable. Rachel receives her child from their house as one that was dead and is alive again, nor shall her grey hairs be brought by her she bore and cherished in her bosom, with sorrow to the grave. The scene of restoration and reconciliation is indeed such an one, as angels might leave awhile the beatific vision, and stoop down to behold with delight and rapture. But you have seen not only the picture so often pencilled with glowing colours from this place, but you have seen what is infinitely better, the originals, and I do apologize for trespassing on your patience one moment by a faint representation, not only not necessary, but which I know may nauseate by a too frequent obtrusion. Life presents many a sad tragedy; but the pathos may be destroyed by familiarity with the scene. And why do I say more? why indeed have I said so much? The cause, of which I am this day to be the humble and delegated pleader, wants not, in this audience, any advocate. It has often, I know, been powerfully pleaded by my predecessors; it has been sufficiently pleaded by your own hearts, it speaks for itself, and it has spoken most audibly and effectually, as thousands can testify, with acclamations of gratitude. It is indeed the cause of that part of the species which must ever be most interesting, and in whose honour and welfare society in general, and every man in particular, is most nearly and deeply concerned. Such are our clients? and for what do they sue? An opportunity to rise from their fall, the means of restoration to virtue and to peace. This is the boon they ask, and it is sure to be granted.

It has indeed been most generously granted by you; and I trust will continue so long as Christianity shall remain the national religion.

But you will allow me to remind you, though I am sensible, this also is a topic which requires no importunate obtrusion, that pecuniary aid is at this time greatly required. Let those in particular, who are not constant contributors, who are here only on occasions like this, rejoice in the opportunity of sharing in the blessing of giving liberally and co-operating with the Society; not listening to the cavils of objectors, or the doubts of the cold-hearted or over-scrupulous, or to the nice discriminations of some who palliate their parsimony, by hesitating in their selection among the various modes of beneficence; rather let them, on the principle of embracing the time present, the opportunity that occurs, do good at once and effectually, while they have it in their power, while the divine grace supplies a proper occasion, and inclines their hearts to Christian compassion; let them obey even the momentary impulse of pity, remembering, that the case for which their charity is now solicited, is one, which, (as the facts in the gospel lead us to believe,) Christ would himself treat with the tenderest compassion.

There is, it is to be observed and lamented, a kind of fashion in the modes of eleemosynary benefaction. Haply it may be said, that any charity, is at any time, the favourite of so capricious a dictatrix of human conduct. Some good is doubtless done, even by the desultory beneficence of caprice. But yet it is a culpable fickleness, which forsakes and neglects the good old institutions of our fathers, to the utility of which experience has set her seal, to gratify a feverish thirst for novelty, merely in affectation of a more judicious selection, where peradven-

ture, there is little cause for preference; and the rule should be, that where good is evidently produced, and the grace of charity duly called forth and exercised, there should be to the rich, at least, who can patronise different institutions at the same time, no hesitation, in contributing, whenever occasion occurs, to the welfare and continuance of them all. They are all honours to the country; all blessings to the poor; all acceptable to heaven; and all entitled to the support of every real Christian, furnished with ability.

Let us, who are now convened by the grace of God for the purpose, be steadfast and immovable, in supporting an Institution to which time has given its sanction. Let us rejoice that this is a charity, not confined to the relief of bodily diseases or temporary distress, but extending its influence to the mind, and contributing to save souls alive; a sublime charity, charity to the soul of an immortal creature, which no alteration of modes or external circumstances can ever render useless or obsolete. The charitable act which we shall do this day will be the means, long after the objects shall have left this house, of creating or preserving in them "a clean heart," and of "renewing a right spirit within them;" convincing them through life, and in all their future relations "that he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh, reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

The compassion of our Saviour is to be our model. We feel the momentary impulse, let us obey it as he did, before the world and its cares, and its pleasures, and its vanities erase the impression. Come unto us, let us say, to the fallen daughter of affliction, come unto us, thou that labourest and art heavy laden with sin and its wages sorrow, and we will

refresh you. Our doors of mercy are open to thee, when every other door, but that which leadeth to destruction, is closed upon thee. Thou hast no friend, and no father and no mother; they hide themselves from thee in shame and sorrow; but we will be unto thee as a friend, a father and a mother, till thy reformation shall restore thee to them all, and they shall open their arms to receive the penitent mourner, wearied and sorely bruised and wounded in the dismal, thorny, miry path, into which thou hast strayed; here shalt thou find pity; nor pity only, but rest, a home, food, a shelter, raiment, and instruction in thy duty to God, thy neighbour, and thyself; and he who came to bind up the broken heart and to heal the bruised, will pour balsam into thy wounds. Thy days of bitterness shall soon be past, and pious sorrow, by the grace of God, turned to holy joy. He who sincerely repents (said a father of the church) has almost recovered his innocence; and sincere repentance, under the law of love, which Christ established, is by his divine favour, restoration and recovery, pardon and salvation.

May God give thee grace to avail thyself of this invitation, and us also grace to proceed in this and every other work which may improve our charity, and secure to ourselves the compassionate regard of that High Priest, who on earth felt pity for the suffering sinner, and still, though exalted to heaven, is touched with a feeling of all our infirmities.

SERMON XXVIII.

THE EDUCATION OF THE POOR RECOMMENDED.

[Preached at Bedford Chapel, Bloomsbury, 1814, for the benefit of the National Schools.]

JOHN, viii. 12.—*I am the Light of the World.*

LET THERE BE LIGHT, was the first command of the Lord God Almighty, in the noblest exertion of his omnipotence. The glorious emanation, bursting from its orient fountains, instantly obeyed; and all nature, fresh from the hand of her Author, glowed with the beauty of variegated colour. But this primordial light, lovely though its appearance, and stupendous its essence, is still, we know, but a body created, physical and material. Another light there is, and a greater and a holier, of which the solar beam, all pure and radient as it streams from the day-star, is but the emblem and the harbinger.

For hear the voice of our Saviour. I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. In the vivid language of eastern metaphor, he styles himself the sun of the intellectual system, the luminary of the soul.

Light indeed is synonimous in Scripture with wisdom, knowledge, happiness, life; life spiritual, and life immortal: and darkness, in the same figurative language, implies ignorance, misery, and death; spiritual death, in the midst of animal life, and eternal death, when animal life is no more.

He indeed who made the sun, and commanded it thus to revolve for ever in its orbit, GOD HIMSELF, says the Apostle, is LIGHT; and we are well assured,

that the first adoration ever offered by man was to the sun; of all visible objects, the most strikingly illustrious, and most obviously beneficial. But as the sun is to the earth, to the visual faculties of animals, and to all things susceptible of its influence, such is Christ, such the spirit of the *Holy One that inhabits eternity*, to the soul of man; dispensing to it analogous benefits, producing on it analogous effects, dispelling its darkness, and vivifying, with genial warmth, all its latent energy.

On the day of redemption, indeed, the FIAT of God operated no less graciously and powerfully than when, in the morning of the creation, the sun, for the first time, *went forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoiced, as a giant, to run his course.*

For when the *sun of righteousness arose, with healing in his wings, and the feet of him that brought glad tidings, appeared so beautiful on the mountains,* how did he announce his dignity? *I am the light of the world.* It is a description truly sublime; beautiful in its imagery, and no less just than beautiful. Few are the words; but magnificent the style, and momentous the purport; such indeed as could proceed from the lips of him alone, the loftiness of whose nature enabled him to utter them with appropriate grace, and without the slightest semblance of vain glory.

That Christ is the sacred source of all spiritual illumination is thus plainly declared, and must be confessed by all his followers, with sentiments of wonder and gratitude. But the occasion, on which we are now assembled, requires that we view him as the world's great luminary in another sense; a sense most highly interesting to man, though in comparison, but secondary and subordinate. I mean that

he is collaterally the copious source of the less perfect radiance, still, in a high degree luminous, which has flowed upon the world from the preservation of LEARNING in the dark ages; from the cultivation of science in times of barbarism; and from a partial attention to education, in some mode and measure, however confined and inadequate, amidst the shades of ignorance gross as universal.

For it is true (and the page of history will justify the assertion), that the learning, or the means of learning, which we now so amply possess, were preserved from total destruction, by circumstances peculiar to Christianity.

It is a curious but incontestable fact, that for ages after the sixth century, when all learning in Europe was enveloped in clouds, the Egyptian darkness was in some degree dispelled from the church, and a dim religious light constantly preserved in the cloister. A pale tremulous flame, every where else extinguished, still glimmered through the aisles, and faintly illumined the arches of the abbey. Feeble indeed were its rays, like those of a sepulchral lamp or a vapour in the charnel-house. It emitted a light scarcely more than darkness visible; yet still it preserved those scintillations, whose flame afterwards irradiated whole empires with its blaze. It quivered, like an expiring taper for a time, but at last kindled a torch which lighted up the avenues to education; and eventually became the *light of the world* in the diffusion of general knowledge, together with the peculiar radiance of revealed religion.

According to this view of the church and of ancient times, the highest learning and philosophy, even the *organon* of our own Verulam, the system of our own Newton, the epics of our own Milton, all the advancements in polite learning and recondite science,

originating in the excited energies of the human mind, may be traced to the light, preserved, during the dark ages, in the church, and in the church only: a light which was derived from the *sun of righteousness,* the star in the east; that star, which beamed over Bethlehem, at once a symbol of wisdom and a guidance to the wise.

To this religious light, increasing as it advanced in our hemisphere, we confessedly owe not only the universities of this land, but the free grammar-schools founded in the great city and in almost every provincial town; and lastly, the parochial charity-schools; those seminaries of humble, but useful learning, which we are at this hour assembled, under the same auspicious light, to maintain, augment, and improve. Thus has the torch of learning kindled at the altar, been handed down, from age to age, unquenched by the barbarians of the north, whose savage fury devoted in its march, whole libraries to the flames, and (if the church had not afforded an inviolable asylum), would have crushed with ruthless havoc, in one heap of ruin, all the remains of classical antiquity. The lustre indeed of learning, the elegance of the fine arts, the sublimity of science, had no charms in the eyes of vandal nations, and served but to upbraid them with the barbarity of their ignorance. Light was to them, as sunshine to the owl. Add to which, that *they loved darkness, because their deeds were evil.*

But the CHURCH secured the sacred deposit in her shrine, and saved the time-honoured rolls of wisdom, art, and science, under the veil of the temple. In the church, during times most auspicious to the progress of knowledge, some degree of education was always necessary to qualify the lowest function-

aries round the altar, even the puerile attendants on the priests, for the regular performance of the ritual and liturgical service. Thus in ages most unfavourable to literary acquirements, there existed in the cathedral, the monastery, and the convent, petty schools for the instruction of young Acolytes (as they were called), instruction in reading always, and in writing often; those humble attainments which were necessary to the choral chaunt, and the responses of a prescribed formulary. Attached to religious houses was usually a repository of manuscripts, and an office termed the *scriptorium*, where copies of the best classics, as well as legends of the worst superstition, were not only transcribed laboriously, accurately, and sometimes most beautifully; but illuminated with the brightest colours and most delicate touches of the pencil; and it may be observed, by the way, that the practice of illuminating manuscripts, greatly promoted the fine art of painting; an art which had no inconsiderable influence in the advancement of intellectual proficiency, and the promotion of polite literature.

These conventual offices constituted a kind of eleemosynary schools, usually appendant to the church and to religious houses, and afforded a partial education; the education of young ecclesiastics, who in process of time carried the lamp, which they had lighted at the altar, into the busy walks of life, and among the circles of laic and civil society. Thus illumined in the sanctuary and the cloister, they unavoidably imparted some rays of holy light to all the labyrinths of many-coloured life. Ecclesiastics (because few others were qualified), exclusively presided over the department of education; as they continue to preside over it at this hour, by the voluntary choice and deference of the laity. The

knowledge acquired in the professional study of theology, opened the avenues to general science; and the Christian religion became the nursing mother of learning as well as of virtue.

So justly and characteristically did the great luminary of Christendom predicate of himself *I am the light of the world;* and doubtless he who gave the light, evinced by the very act, his intention that it should be imparted by the receivers, as means and opportunity might occur, or be procured. Doubtless the gracious Being who said, *let there be light,* has made it our bounden duty to co-operate with his benign intentions, in communicating whatever light we may enjoy to those of our fellow-creatures who still sit in darkness, benighted in the recesses of obscure and lowly life, where poverty hides her head in shame; and ignorance, all unconscious, too often reposes in a lethargic and deadly slumber.

It has pleased the *father of lights* (as our *father in heaven* is frequently styled), that man should exercise the virtue of charity in acting, on many occasions, to his fellow man, as a superior and tutelary being; but particularly, in dispensing the light of knowledge; a gift which enriches the receiver without diminution of the donor's share. It is, we may assuredly conclude, the high behest of our Creator, and the declared will of our Redeemer, that the spiritual and intellectual sun which rose at the creation, and broke forth, with added splendour at the redemption, should *shine more and more until the perfect day,* and in due time illuminate the universe. It was clearly the edict of Omnipotence, "Let there be light" spiritual as well as natural; and shall man contravene the command of power irresistible, acting under the impulse of mercy infinite? Greatly is it to be deplored, that some among the sons of men

have exhibited signs of an audacity so presumptuous; have endeavoured to veil the eyes of the poor from *the sight of things belonging to their peace;* have contended, with all their ingenuity, to prevent the Sun of righteousness from shining on the cottage of labour, and cheering, with its warmth, the chill abode of unprotected indigence.

And these are they who calumniate the institution, and oppose the encouragement of charity-schools; representing our efforts to diffuse knowledge among the poor by parochial, national, and eleemosynary education, as incompatible with political wisdom, and dangerous to the state.

It is scarcely worth while to discuss all the objections which the narrow views of cold-hearted, statistical writers have suggested against the charity-schools of this benevolent country. The greatest stress is laid on two; which we may briefly consider, though at the hazard of abusing your patience. First, say they, the education of the poor encourages idleness by rendering them disinclined to labour; secondly, it disturbs the arrangement of society by confounding the ranks of regular subordination.

As to the first objection, that knowledge causes in the poor an aversion to labour, do the poor then, in their uninstructed state, labour from choice? Have they not already, with the feelings common to all mankind, an aversion to toil and trouble; and, if they could, would they not, like others, live a life of comparative ease? Is labour their favourite pastime, their dear delight, an exercise willingly taken for health and pleasure, like the rural sports of ranks more elevated? Is it joyous to spend the toilsome hours in the perpetual night of a mine? To turn the wheel in the manufactory from morning till evening without a prospect of cessation or variety? To bear

on their shoulders the heavy burdens of merchandise? To sweat at the anvil or the plough? No, certainly; for man, when he feels no spur, stimulating him to action, is naturally inclined to bask in the sunshine, and pass his hours either in the repose of indolence, or in some selected mode of pleasant activity. Be assured that hard and constant labour, the labour of a life, is always the effect of necessity alone, imperious, unrelenting necessity. The poor labour that they may eat, they labour that they may be clothed, they labour that they may be sheltered by a roof from the inclemency of the clime. Necessary are all the objects of their labour to their bare existence. Will the daily want of food, of raiment, or of shelter be removed, by an ability acquired in the charity-schools, to read the Bible, or even to write their own names, and calculate their little earnings and expenditure? Labour they must, as they did before they learned their alphabet, and were qualified to spell out, on the repose of the sabbath, or at the close of the week-day, their Prayer-book, their Testament, their Catechism, or their Whole Duty of Man. Labour they must, as they did before they had learned by heart their duty towards God, and their duty towards their neighbour; yes, they must labour still, or they have this alternative: they must even starve, be clothed in rags, and find not where to lay their heads. The alphabet affords no substitute for bread, or raiment, or a roof for shelter and repose. Nor will a book, however good, or however well they may know how to use it, supersede the labour of the loom, the plough, the spade, and the axe. With the highest improvement which these humble schools of charity can give them, they must, at the call of nature, and under the pressure of want, submit with patience to

the iron hand of necessity. And the better they are taught the lessons of religion, the more cheerfully are they likely to submit. For the improvement of their reason, the melioration of their disposition, and their awakened sense of moral rectitude, will induce them to discharge with less reluctance than before, the severest duties incumbent on their allotted state. They will probably, when trained to habits of piety, *labour more abundantly*, because they will feel the solace of religious hope, mitigating the pain of toil, cheering the long hours of confinement, and sweetening the intervals of liberty and leisure.

Experience has indeed removed the first objection. For in the northern division of this island all the poor are, and have long been educated, in parochial schools, with a strict attention to morality and religion. And can the united kingdom exhibit examples more uniformly excellent than those of the natives of the north, either of sobriety, industry, or submission to authority? How rarely are they convicted at the tribunal, how rarely, as victims of the law, do they suffer death, or pain, or disgrace? All of them can read, and most of them do read from choice (reading furnishing them with one favourite mode of spending their days pleasantly), and all, at the same time, are able and willing to labour, as their fortunate employers can testify, with additional skill, contentment, and alacrity, in consequence of a virtuous and pious education. Their reason improved by early culture, and their sober habits of thinking, cause them to be convinced of the necessity of their humble station, and to deem happiness perfectly compatible, as it certainly is, with honest, healthy, and industrious poverty. They feel indeed the evils of indigence; but bear them with pious and cheerful resignation to the will of that God,

whom they have learned in infancy to adore. None, at the same time, are more eager to advance themselves in the ranks of life, and none do advance themselves more frequently by those virtues which recommend them to their superiors; the principles and habits of which were acquired at the places of parochial education.

And have we not in the example of the northern Britons, an incontestible proof of the utility, even in a political sense, of national or universal instruction? Have we not an attestation, under the seal of experience, that the exertions of the labourer, and the ingenuity of the mechanic are not impeded or diminished; but promoted by teaching them to read and write? And since the result of experience must ever supersede the most subtle speculations of theory, the first question, appears to be unanswerably decided.

Painful and invidious would it be, to compare the effects of neglected education among the poor natives of our sister island, a brave and generous race, furnished by nature with keen sensibility and ardent genius, but sometimes barbarized and brutalized, through the defect of early discipline. Who but must weep over these forlorn children of want, when blinded by ignorance, and seduced by passion, they fall victims to the laws of their country; ever ready as they are, to stand foremost in her battles, and bleed in her defence. The contrast of this neighbouring island with the northern parts of our own is striking; and the difference in this state of the common people is sufficient to repel every attack of that sophistry which insinuates, that to enlighten the lower classes, is to encourage idleness, with all its consequent vice and woe.

And with respect to the second objection, which

asserts that to educate the poor is to disturb subordination; it is true, indeed, that, before the discovery of that most important art, the art of printing, the highest orders of society, in this, and all other countries of Europe, were grossly illiterate. It is true that, to have taught the lower orders to read, at that inauspicious period, might, in the natural course of things, have had a tendency to revolution. In point of knowledge, the rich and great would have been inferior to the poor and lowly; and since knowledge is power, the CONE (to which a well arranged community has been compared,) might have been inverted. But under the present circumstances of Europe, no such effect can result from instructing the poor universally. By the diffusion of knowledge, consequent on the typographical invention, the whole fabric of society has been elevated. Therefore the poor stand higher than they did before; but they still form the basis of the pyramid. The regular gradation to the apex is not, in the smallest degree, disturbed. The poor man is elevated positively, but not relatively; and so, in exact proportion, is the rich man. Both have risen together, lifted up with the whole frame. The base is not raised from its own proper and subordinate place; but the platform itself, the area, the united pile, is exalted above its ancient level. The pedestal is not altered either by elongation or transposition. The Corinthian column still towers in all its beauty, majesty, and altitude. The Doric and Tuscan stand below, plain yet massy. The extreme ranks do not approximate. The rich and poor indeed, as God appointed, do occasionally meet together, for many wise purposes, yet in the arrangements of social order, they remain distant and distinct, at their just, natural, and appropriate interval. The fabric is still firm; its solidity

increased by accessions to its magnificence; and the stability of the capital secured by added breadth and gravity at the foundation.

It seems indeed probable, that the more MIND there is in any free nation, the more intelleet in the mass of the people, the stronger will be the whole social edifice, from the subterraneous cell, up to the cloud-capt dome; for instead of such materials as *hay and stubble* (to use the scriptural expressions,) its beams will be of oak, its bars of iron, and its walls of marble. MIND is the basis of all permanent power; and woe to the potentate who expects lasting security from the tottering props of plebeian ignorance. He builds, like the fool, on the sand, who erects a dynasty on the superstition, the prejudices, or the passions of a populace grossly ignorant, and therefore easily misguided and urged to deeds of frenzy.*

And so much for the second objection to charity-schools, which originates in an idea that they weaken empire and endanger tranquillity by disturbing subordination. "Pride," it has been well observed, "is not founded on the improvement of the understanding, but on the weakness and defects of it." None are prouder, "than the most foolish of the animals around us; and, it is ignorance of what is better, which makes men suppose they are possessed of all excellence."

But why should I fatigue attention by enumerating, or confuting the cavils of minute philosophers and petty politicians, who pretend, and have asserted, that none of our charitable institutions are

* "I have ever thought the prohibition of the means of improving our *rational nature*, to be the worst species of tyranny that the *insolence* and *perverseness* of mankind ever dared to exercise."
BURKE.

consistent with an enlightened policy? What is this policy? It is at best but a worldly policy, which in this instance, Christian wisdom repudiates with disdain. Even as a worldly policy I think it erroneous. And how, as they pretend, is it enlightened? Not surely by the light which flows from the great luminary of Christianity, from the sacred lamp at the altar; but by the false fire, the *ignus fatuus* of vanity; or, the factitious phosphor of atheistical philosophy; a philosophy, which idolizes matter, and falls down in adoration of nature in preference to its Author.

Let us beware also of that narrow system of modern times which would govern men in society on principles of mere calculation; which appreciates human life at a low rate, and is ready to sacrifice millions at the unhallowed shrines of avarice and ambition. Among the recent refinements of a godless wisdom is that which considers the Lord of the creation merely as a sensitive machine, with eyes, arms, hands, and fingers, formed to manufacture some commodity or luxury, saleable in the emporiums of commerce; merely as an animated engine, to be worked at the will of opulence and power, for pecuniary emolument; merely as a breathing mill, or animal automaton, which cannot stand still a moment, for the purposes of moral and religious discipline, without irreparable loss of time and unpardonable waste of wealth; a political delinquency, in the estimate of the modern sophist and statistical calculator, more culpable and heinous than any infringement of the decalogue.

Such policy, such a principle, such a philosophy has no credit, no weight, no influence on a Christian auditory, before whom, to mention is to condemn, to describe, is to explode and reject it. The wealth

of nations in a Christian's estimate is the goodness, the probity, the virtuous industry, and useful knowledge, amongst individuals, high and low, rich and poor, who constitute the grand aggregate of a national community. The mind is the man; and doubtless the bulwark of a country, is the noble spirit of a sound, virtuous, religious people, duly informed by a competent education, and effectually restrained from all injustice and enormity, by the fear of God, and a Christian conscience.

Truth and reason, under all existing circumstances, are great, and will endure, as well as prevail. These form the columns of society, and like a rock of adamant, will stand the violence of the waves, and defy the corrosions of time, and the shocks of casualty. But how can truth and reason exist in the mass of the people without knowledge? and how can knowledge become general and pervade the whole body without national education, furnished to the poor by eleemosynary bounty, as it is to the rich, by their own voluntary choice and personal assiduity?

Consistently with this conviction, and acting with the sound policy of the *children of light*, you have persevered, notwithstanding the plausibility of objections, in patronising, improving, and augmenting, your charity-schools. Consistently with your persuasion, as members of the church of England, you have been zealous that the national schools, as well as the parochial, should be conducted according to the principles, doctrines, and discipline of the established religion. Charity-schools, whether parochial or national, you are aware, are the porch, and the vestibule, either to the church or the conventicle. You deem it of most momentous importance to the church, that the direct avenues to it should be made

smooth and clean, and light and pleasant. If the entrances to the sanctuary of the establishment are neglected, or unilluminated, you are justly apprehensive, that the imbecility of youth may be seduced from the paths of peace and sober piety into the wilderness of fanatical error; and lost in labyrinths, where discordant guides, often differing no less from each other than from the church, might lead the poor wanderer through the thorns of perplexity to the whirlpools of madness and despair.

Consistently and kindly you hold out a lanthorn to the church, and let your light shine before the feet of the young pilgrim in his progress to the sanctuary; the seat of rational piety, the school of sound instruction; the standard of a light which illuminates without dazzling; the receptacle of a fire which warms without burning; the dispenser of a heat which cherishes the vital principle, without danger of a morbid calenture. Sound religion, you well know, is equally removed from the extremes of a chilling rigor and an ardent fever. And happily our church, in addition to its advantages in disseminating a sound religion with a pure morality, is wisely adapted to the nature and genius of our civil constitution. It is highly favourable to public tranquillity. It is an impregnable rampart not only against infidelity, atheism, and fanaticism, but against sedition, tumult, and insubordination. It allows and favours freedom of discussion; while it preserves for the common good, an authority necessary to prevent confusion and all the evil works of anarchical misrule. It is built on the foundation of the Scriptures, the prophets, and the apostles; *Jesus Christ being the head corner stone.* Therefore we must love our church, therefore we must defend our church; and defend it with a zeal no less ardent, than that which we dis-

play for the constitution of the state; that free and wise system of our forefathers, which has rendered our island the pride and ornament of civil society. And how can we defend it more effectually than by educating our youth in its doctrines? Yet in the utmost ardour of affection for both church and state, the spirit of Christianity demands that we support our own institutions with all the mildness of moderation, all the forbearance of philanthropy, without bitterness, without hypocrisy, *speaking the truth in love*, and maintaining our own conviction of rectitude with every indulgence that may consist with wisdom, to human error and fallibility.

With a natural attachment to the church, of which we are members, we come forward at this juncture, not only to support our old charity-schools, but to augment their numbers and improve their plan; by adopting the newly discovered modes of facilitation, expedition, and economy, imported under happy auspices, from an eastern clime; that clime, from which light of every kind, natural, intellectual, and spiritual, first beamed on mortal man, wandering and lost in the shades of ignorance. As churchmen, we cannot but favour a system which favours our own church; the church of our fathers, the church of our children and families, the church of our country; a great and glorious church, richly adorned with sanctity and learning, with temples most magnificent, with all appendages adequate to its use and ornament, and become even more venerable, and if possible, more hallowed, from the circumstances of long duration and high antiquity. As churchmen, we must patronise a system which instructs the youth of our nation in the cathechism of our excellent liturgy, and which conducts them to that place of worship,

where our own children were initiated by baptism, and which we ourselves, from choice and for conscience sake, frequent, as often as we assemble to pour forth our praises and thanksgivings to Almighty God, and to hear the words of sound, sober, and scriptural instruction.

In schools superintended by a church, which discountenances the extravagance of enthusiasm, soberness of mind will be taught; and soberness of mind is essential to the permanency of all religious principle. Without it, religion becomes insanity; and its votaries, under the effects of a disordered imagination, too often, instead of a school and a church, require the discipline of the physician, and the manacles of an hospital.

It is to be hoped that the spirit of party will never interrupt these labours of love. Charity rejoices that good is done, and is not forward to depreciate the deed or the doer of it, from schismatical prejudice; and therefore the Christian philanthrope will not oppose the national instruction of the church catechism. How indeed can we train up the youth of the nation better, than by teaching them, in the words of the catechism, "to love, honour, and succour their father and mother; to honour and obey the king, and all that are put in authority under him; to hurt nobody by word or deed: to be true and just in all their dealings, to keep their hands from picking and stealing, and their tongues from lying and slandering; to keep their body in soberness and chastity; not to covet or desire other men's goods, but to learn and labour to get their own living, and do their duty in that state of life, to which it shall please God to call them." Can we, I ask, teach them in any better manner than by words like these; founding all their moral virtues on the

love of God, on obedience to Christ, and on reverence for law and order, human and divine.

To give the poor children this sort of education, to inspire them with the fear of God, and to afford them the means of learning every thing that is honest and of good report, you are now assembled; and for the promotion of your purpose, a purpose recommended by patriotism, by Christianity, by the example of our grand national institution, and indeed of the united kingdom, I stand this day the delegated petitioner of your bounty. But solicitation is superfluous. Your bounty has, I see, by the annual subscriptions flowed, and will continue to flow, with spontaneous exuberance. It would be a violation of the respect due to a congregation, avowedly assembled for the purpose of charitable contribution, to weary you with importunity, or prescribe to your munificence. You want not the impulse of argument and persuasion to extort the reluctant pittance of a cold, formal decency, the scanty dole of the parsimonious hand which grudges while it gives. The happy return of peace and plenty at this moment will probably cause a peculiar expansion of heart, and kindle a more than common glow of benevolence. Our country, amidst the wreck of nations around, has shone forth with undiminished lustre, as the land of liberty, the land of learning, sound philosophy, pure religion, and on this occasion I may add with peculiar triumph, the land of charity; of charity which no privations of long and severe adversity could impede or confine. Our country, in consequence of her steady adherence to religion, in faith and practice, lifts up her head among the nations, the pride and boast of humanity, the glory, the envy, the defence of Europe; nor can I for a moment fear, lest her lustre should be ever tarnished, on occasions

like these, by an ill-timed parsimony. You will as patriots, no less than Christians (as far as such an occasion will allow,) adorn the triumphs of her valour with the trophies of benevolence. You gave largely to foreigners in distress; but at the same time forgot not the child of poverty at your own doors, who was *perishing through lack of knowledge*, and on whom the light of the gospel had scarcely emitted a ray, though all around him was illuminated. You saw the poor vagabond in the streets of the great city; you recognised him as a brother. You remembered, that in the most forlorn outcast and abject, (squalid and deplorable though his exterior,) there is an immortal spirit, which we hope one day may be a partaker with ourselves in a state of glory, of consummate intelligence, of mutual kindness, of exalted felicity. Rough, forbidding, perhaps offensive is the guise of the ragged, famished, wanderer; yet is there a jewel within, a pearl of price, which, with your aid will be disengaged from its incrustation, and prepared to shine, in the light of Christ, with all its primeval brilliancy.

And even in this sublunary state, the effects of education in raising poor persons to great eminence and public utility, have been wonderful. The most illustrious characters in arts and arms have arisen from the darkest, lowest, vale of obscurity. They have sprung with elastic force to extraordinary heights in consequence of native strength, called forth by early culture. Fenced from injury at first, they have risen and towered above their equals, by the hardihood acquired in a chill soil; and, like the oak of the forest, or the pine on the mountain, vegetated with luxuriancy in the bleakest exposure and the wildest solitude. Adversity has indeed been found often favourable to virtue. Many examples

might be cited from the pages of biography. Our gracious Lord himself, we know, was despised and rejected of men—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and the luminary of the world had been at once, and for ever extinguished, if the pride and prejudice of man could have prevailed against the will of the Almighty. But the crown of thorns, which the insolence of authority bound round his bleeding brow, became a more splendid ornament than a diadem of jewels; the dove, a more triumphant standard than the Roman eagle; and the cross, lifted upon high, an ensign more glorious than the banners crimsoned with gore, which waved in the wind, to emblazon a Cæsar's victory. Humble as was the birth of the carpenter's son, mean as the manger that cradled him, dark and dismal as the hour of his crucifixion, he it was who *ascended on high, and led captivity captive.* He it was who became, what he styled himself, the light of the world, and dispensed those rays, which, under your charitable administration, may lighten the path of these little ones, not only to useful and creditable employments and stations in this world, but to a consummation of bliss in realms of light and glory; the light of God's countenance, and the glory of immortal life. And is good so great to be done by any deed of ours this day, and this hour, before we separate? How sweet must be the satisfaction, how serene and exquisite the joy of a well-disposed mind, to consider that the donation of a little superfluity, will contribute to a purpose so extensively, so sublimely, so divinely beneficial. How sleeps the kind-hearted man, lulled on his pillow with the soothing reflection that he has not lost a day by losing an opportunity to do good to some poor unfortunate fellow-creature; but that he has humbly cooperated with his Lord and Saviour,

in a work of love and mercy, and mitigated, in one instance, the sorrows of suffering humanity.

To a mind so disposed, it must be consolatory to reflect, that a grand effort, an effort unprecedented in the history of the world, is now made in our own distinguished country, to advance the happiness of the poor, and indeed to enlighten the understanding, and meliorate the morals of the human race. The poor have now the gospel preached to them, by the instrumentality of the press, by the universal distribution of the Scriptures, and by national schools, in a manner, and to an extent, unparalleled at any previous period, since the light of the world first burst on chaos, in the morning of creation. The result of such labours of love, operating universally, must, at some future period, become stupendously beneficial. Christ declared himself the light of the world; and it has been reserved, (in the unsearchable ways of providence,) for the age in which we exist to diffuse that light, in our own country, to the remotest corners and the darkest recesses, in which penury and ignorance lie helplessly enveloped. The æra may be pronounced (when we take a view of the multiplied public charities around, and consider the vigorous efforts of laity and clergy combined,) the jubilee of Christian benevolence. And shall any one here assembled not be emulous to take a part in this work, and ambitious to become an instrument in the hand of heaven, in communicating the light, which he himself perhaps has amply enjoyed from his infancy; in consequence of more favourable opportunities, and the advantages afforded by competency, not only for a useful, but a liberal education.

Is there one among us who will avow that he wishes not to share in the generous contest of beneficence? But why ask the question? The deeds of

charity, already recorded in the rolls of annual subscription, demonstrate your zeal in the cause, and remove all doubt of your liberality in its support. I have already said I need not importune you. I cannot for a moment, distrust that generosity, on which your voluntary attendance at this hour, (as you were well aware of the occasion,) justifies, or rather demands, a full and unqualified reliance.

I can only venture to urge (and this also may be unnecessary), that you be careful to act, in dispensing your bounty, from a motive purely evangelical. Manage not so ill, as to be bountiful and at the same time uncharitable. Paradoxical as it may appear, the case is possible, and, it may be feared, not uncommon. To avoid it, let us pray that our hearts may be filled with grace, while our hands are extended in munificence. This is to be charitable to our own souls, while we give to others pecuniary assistance. This is to consecrate our gift to God, and to secure the favour of him, whose mercy the most opulent of us all must one day supplicate, with all the earnestness of abject mendicity.

May then the Holy Spirit influence with his affectionate energies all who are here assembled, and give them grace, not only to promote the good work, but to promote it, from the true Christian principle, which is *faith working by love.*

How significant the words! *Faith working by love!* Mark them, ponder them. They form an epitome of the whole doctrine of Christian charity, and may serve as a test and touchstone to assay the sincerity of our virtue.

Such a faith, actuated and acting by such a love, will unbar the gates of light, that glorious light which streams from the world's great luminary, and cooperate with THE FATHER OF LIGHTS in pouring its

beams on all the sons and daughters of want; guiding their feet through the shadowy vale of ignorance, labour, and sorrow, to realms of everlasting rest, along the safe, luminous, pleasant path of piety and peace. Such a faith, actuated and acting by such a love, will cause the sun of righteousness to shine over their, and our own prospects of futurity, and open to the view of all, those regions of glory, to which the only infallible guide is charity; CHARITY, OUT OF A PURE HEART, AND OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE, AND OF FAITH UNFEIGNED.

END OF VOLUME THE SIXTH.

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